

Editorial

Child and Youth Studies in Africa

This issue of the CODESRIA Bulletin focuses on child and youth studies. All the articles, except the last one by Francis Nyamnjoh, were 'think pieces' first presented at an international conference on the theme: 'New Frontiers of Child and Youth Research in Africa', held in Douala, Cameroon, on the 26 and 27 August 2009, and attended by scholars actively engaged in research on issues that affect or concern children and youth in Africa.

Child and youth studies have, in the last two decades, experienced significant advances in theory and this has led to remarkable growth in knowledge in this field. Major research has been done in the areas of children's rights, the characterisation and contexts of child and youth labour, the socio-cultural environment of child and youth socialisation, and the social, political and economic constraints challenging children's self-development.

The 2009 conference was convened to assess the state of research on child and youth studies in Africa. This meeting was a follow-up to two earlier ones. The first one was a CODESRIA-African Studies Centre (Leiden) conference on the theme: 'Children in Global South: Religion, Politics and the Future of the Youth in Asia, Africa and the Middle East' held in Dakar in October 2006. At this meeting, it was made clear that despite the advances recorded in child and youth studies in the last two decades, more still needed to be done to get a better understanding of childhoods and youth-hoods in the global South in the context of a globalisation process driven by neo-liberalism. The worldviews of children and young people are being shaped by phenomena in ways that often make them look for role models or aspire to things outside their own societies. With far broader horizons than the youth of previous generations, their aspirations can easily go beyond what the material conditions of the societies where they live in can allow. A strong urge, and in some instances desperate attempts to migrate to the industrialised countries are among the consequences. What this means is a potential lack of faith in the capability of the leaders of African societies to steer our countries towards a better and brighter future, and a reluctance to fully 'invest' their energies locally, and contribute to the transformation of our economies and societies: that is postponed until after the hypothetical journey to the industrialised countries, for one purpose or another. Many more young people are leaving the countryside for the towns and cities of Africa, and part of this is happening in organised networks.

It would however be misleading to portray African youth in only one colour. The role of the youth in the struggles for democracy and development has been very well documented. A countless number of young people are also engaged in productive activities and family sustenance.

In November of the same year, CODESRIA, in collaboration with Childwatch International (CWI), organised another conference on the theme 'Child Research in Africa', which was held

in Dakar, Senegal. This second meeting identified a number of bottlenecks in researching children and youth issues in Africa, such as the ones just mentioned above. More specifically, this other conference however turned out to be an opportunity for CODESRIA and CWI to engage in an assessment of the research potential on the theme, creating a permanent network of researchers, and devising means of measuring the capacities of research organisations focused on children and the youth in Africa. The conference also provided an opportunity to critically examine the challenges of funding.

The 2009 Douala conference was intended to deepen reflections on the debates and issues raised in the earlier meetings. It was therefore intended to motivate and stimulate discussions on the contributions of research to the improvement of the status of the children on the continent. The emphasis was therefore on the content and quality of research being undertaken in child and youth studies in Africa. The conference was another opportunity for scholars to identify new research themes and the various challenges that need to be overcome in order to expand the frontiers of child and youth research in Africa. It was therefore essential, not only to revisit themes dealt with at earlier meetings, but also to identify new ones. This is part of what Guy Massart deals with in his article 'CODESRIA Planning Workshop: Children and Youth Programme – A few Reflections and Suggestions.'

The 20th century has known significant changes in areas of mass production, mass communication and major advances in technology generally. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have had an overwhelming impact on relations between different generations and socio-professional categories. For instance, it has been established that the web and cellular telephones have greater influence on the lifestyle of the younger than the older generation. The sociability of the youth in a globalised world cannot be fully grasped without referring to the influence of these ICTs. They are perceived as a symbolic element of youth culture in contrast to other technologies. This phenomenon is, among others, examined by Silue Oumar and Joseph Lah Lo-oh. Oumar discusses Youth's Game-playing in Ivorian Public Space: Involving the Youth of Street Dialogue Spaces in Politics. Joseph Lah Lo-oh's 'Youth Transition to Adulthood: Changes, Trends, and Implications for Preparing the next Generation of Africa' and Guguleti Siziba's 'Redefining the Production and Reproduction of Culture in Zimbabwe's Urban Space: The Case of Urban Grooves' also discuss similar phenomena.

There are several pertinent questions that need to be answered: What is the impact of these technologies on the new generation and how do they affect their traditional and local ties? How do social standards influence the use of the new technologies? How does one's location or theoretical orientation influence one's comprehension of different aspects of the social condi-

tions of children and youth? What challenges do social changes pose to social research in general, and child and youth research in particular? To what extent can the new generation create new life styles as they respond to and negotiate the new social realities of Africa? How important are the influence of global social change processes in understanding the reality of childhood?

These are questions to which research must try to find answers, as it is important to go beyond the description of the characteristics of education, labour and family to focus on issues that touch on the subjectivity of the youth. The construction of such subjectivity and the individualisation processes characterising the behaviour of the new generation has an impact on the relations that the youth have with conventional political institutions. Instead of stigmatising the new generation for their loss of interest in conventional political life, it is important to deepen research work on the new forms of the youth's adhesion to non-institutionalised domains, in order to comprehend better the active participation of the youth in their respective societies. In "'It is not Normal but it is Common": Elopement Marriage and the Mediated Recognition of Youth Identity in Harare, Zimbabwe', Jeremy Jones partly examines what happens when a society is under great stress, using marriage in Harare as a case study.

The conference also provided an opportunity to revisit some key issues linked to the various approaches, concepts and tools of child and youth research, such as 'agent' and 'voice', 'social generation' and 'generational scheduling'. Finally, it probed the relations of power that exist between the researcher and youth in order to improve the theorisation of the power relations in youth research. In 'Poetry Slam – A new Form of the Youth's Expression: Half-way Between Rap and Traditional Poetry' Mamadou Drame demonstrates one of the ways through which the youth have been able to achieve unequalled freedom of speech because, in Slam, they are able to do whatever they wish without restriction.

The last article, by Francis Nyamnjoh, focuses on what needs to be done, not only to revitalise CODESRIA journals, but also our research agendas. It discusses the role of CODESRIA journals in general and demands that they occupy the forefront in the promotion of scholarly debates as informed by the African research community. These journals were founded to support social research and knowledge production and consumption in Africa. They will not be able to perform that role effectively and creditably unless they are based on a scholarship that is both theoretically and methodologically creative.

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“It’s not Normal But It’s Common”: Elopement, Marriage and the Mediated Recognition of Youth Identity in Harare, Zimbabwe

An analysis of ‘African youth’ is quite simple, really—once you decide what you mean by ‘Africa’ and ‘youth’. *That*, unfortunately, proves to be a good deal more complicated. Take the first term: Africa. On one hand, it refers to a physical entity, a mere land mass. On the other hand, we know that certain meanings are predicated on it, and certain histories ascribed to it (Mudimbe 1988). Colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial experiences are mapped onto its face, and decidedly social matters like race, subjection, and religion find in it an apparently solid ground. The presumption in the phrase ‘African youth’, then, is that this geographical and epistemological space is a good one for comparison; that somehow, the experience of ‘youth’ therein will be comparable. This presumption may be correct; I am inclined to think so. Yet there may be other, equally valid comparisons to make, and there is always a lingering question as to just how much, say, the children of South Africa’s rising black bourgeoisie share in common with the child refugees in Darfur. ‘Youth’ presents similar problems, as the literature on the matter has slowly come to realize (Honwana and de Boeck 2005). While there is a growing consensus that it is a ‘social shifter’ (Durham 2000; Durham 2004)—which is saying something more interesting than that it is conceptually shifty—it is hard to get beyond the apparent links to biological facts of age. After all, part of what seems to have thrust youth into the theoretical limelight is the demographic (i.e. age-based) dominance of young people on the continent. On top of that, youth is also deployed as a comparative term, one which presumes that some other way of dividing the social sphere (e.g. in terms of social class) is not equally or more relevant. By contrast, for instance, comparatively little attention is given to patterns of violence or consumption amongst African seventy year-olds *qua* African seventy year-olds (cf. Cole and Durham 2007). We might call them ‘gerontocrats’ (Bayart 1993) but their behaviour is not often analyzed in relation to their being ‘elderly’.

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None of this is to say that the notion of ‘African youth’ is a chimera or unworthy of discussion. It is merely to point to the difficult task of theoretical composition that is required of any comparative project. Indeed, it would be unfortunate to look back and see that all we were really comparing was our own assumptions. It is in that spirit that I have chosen to examine what I take to be a crucial, but relatively under-theorized part of studies of African youth: ‘marriage’, and ‘household’. Does this apparently ‘domestic’ life of youth matter, theoretically speaking? Surely, there is more to it than commodity aesthetics and furtive sexual encounters. Do African youth marry, and when they do, are they still youth? How do youth *actually* fit into households and kin networks, and how does this compare to how they are purported to fit in? What, in the end, is a ‘household’? My entry into this conceptual tangle is the oft-heard claim—and complaint—that African youth are failing to reach social adulthood (Hansen 2005; Honwana and de Boeck 2005). On its face, this a purely empirical claim, but answering it properly requires a definition: in what does ‘social adulthood’ consist? In many accounts it seems to be measured by marriage and the formation of ‘independent’ households, both of which are said to depend on the financial status of the young man in question. Blocked financial capacity leads to an inability to marry and form an independent household, which leads to postponed social adulthood (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005; Masquelier 2005). Is this actually true of most youth, though? My sense—taken in part from my own work—is that it is not true, at least not universally. Far from being blocked, African youth are actually forming new households quite rapidly. In fact, unless we spuriously argue that Africa’s population growth either stems from long-established households (for instance, via polygyny),

or from single mothers living under the purview of their elders, the claim simply *cannot* be true.

The source of the contradiction, of course, lies in the ‘social’ aspect of ‘social adulthood’. Here, the question is not whether one is an adult, but whether one is somehow a ‘proper’ or ‘normal’ adult. Much the same can be said of marriage and household: not just any conjugal union will do. Clearly, these normative judgments are deeply gendered—a fact that is too often brushed aside. As one young Zimbabwean man quipped to me, *apropos* of the low marriage age of his female compatriots: ‘girls don’t have a problem becoming adults; they have a problem staying youth’. But I want to argue that gender-blindness is only one manifestation of a broader conceptual error, whereby we take local discourses about ‘social adulthood’ as statements of fact rather than as statements *about* facts. The problem is not listening to what people say but that, as a tool for analyzing ‘youth’, social adulthood and its domestic entanglements mask a host of deeply consequential assumptions about social order—what it is, what it should be, and how it is to be maintained. It tempts us as analysts to follow the bulk of the public in assuming that that present reality is a negative departure from norms that supposedly held in the past. The result is a discourse on social adulthood that is structured so as to be almost inescapably nostalgic.

Nostalgia is not a crime, of course, nor is it peculiar to Africa. But it is striking that our discussions of youth seem to be somewhat mired in that theoretical rut. The legacy of Durkheim looms large in the African social sciences (Kuper 1973).¹ If, as he and his followers would have it, society is a set of enduring *sui generis* institutions (like marriage and household) (Durkheim 1933), any failure to reproduce those ‘traditional’ or ‘customary’ institutions must constitute a social crisis. More specifically with regards to youth, if ordered households are taken to be the seed of proper social order, the apparent position of youth between households (their own and that of their parents) makes them problematic by definition. This ten-

gency is obviously resisted in a number of contemporary accounts of youth, and my grouping them together in what follows must be understood as a rhetorical device rather than a critique *per se*. I want to thematize a larger conceptual problem: how to come to some *other* account of social order, one that does not repeat Durkheim's problematique of social reproduction. This seems to be a particularly difficult task in the African empirical context, where societies are under continuous and systematic strain (be it from the legacies of colonialism, the continuing experience of neocolonialism and dictatorship, war and ethnic conflict, or mass unemployment and poverty). The old Marxist anthropology arguments about the kinship mode of production (Meillassoux 1981) are too deeply wedded to the Durkheimian project of mechanical reproduction. Recent efforts to bridge the gap between 'elites' and the masses (a lumpen-proletariat?) with 'cultures of corruption' (Olivier de Sardan 1999), or 'traditionalization' (Chabal and Daloz 1999) or 'conviviality' (Mbembe 2001) are all interesting, but tell us very little about the contemporary realities of marriage and household. What is left? What sort of conceptual units can we use in our descriptions of social order, and how do youth, marriage, and household fit in?

Clearly, the predicament will not be resolved in a short paper. What I would like to do below is simply test some of our assumptions about youth, marriage, and household using material gathered from young people in the 'high density' townships of Zimbabwe's capital, Harare. I hope that will help illuminate the stakes of our continuing to say that African youth are failing to reach social adulthood. In Harare, as it turns out, most young people are *not* failing in that regard—not, at least, if marriage is seen as the key marker of the transition. A majority of them are married in one way or another by the time they are twenty-five, many are parents, and the majority consider themselves to be somehow 'adults' as a result. It is the stuff in parenthesis, the 'in-some-way-or-another', that must be further considered. It is from here that I take my title: 'common... but not normal'. Many youth marry via a process of elopement that is paradoxically both culturally recognized and publicly repudiated, both 'traditional' and a sign of tradition's failure. By outlining these marital experiences, I hope to bring to the fore

two key facts about marriage and household that are masked by the discourse on social adulthood. First, the very fact that youth *are* marrying and forming households—only not in normative fashion. Second, the fact that marriage and household are not just composed by rituals reproducing social order *sui generis* (namely, the exchange of bridewealth), but also by highly gendered everyday acts of exchange that provisionally stand in for 'proper' tradition. Ultimately, I speculate that a deeper exploration of this provisional quality, and indeed, of the category 'provisionality' more generally (Simone 2004a, 2004b), may promise to pull us out of the doldrums of ever-failing reproduction.

Let me begin with the story of Okocha.² I have known him since he was in grade school, but we also lived in the same house in Chitungwiza, Harare's largest 'township' suburb, for several years during the late nineties. At the time, I was working with his older brother, a long time friend, and he in turn was supporting Okocha's secondary schooling.

In 2006, Okocha and I began meeting again in the local market where I was doing research. Now a young man of about twenty, he was given to wearing a baseball cap (worn slightly askew), timberland-style boots, baggy jeans and a variety of 'bling' belt-buckles. One day, we started reminiscing about old times. 'You were a real *tsotsi*' (a thug, thief, dishonest or flashy person, etc), I observed, recalling how on several occasions he had broken into my room to steal my cassettes and cd's. He just laughed, 'Yeah, well I was drinking a lot then. I liked your stuff, especially that little radio you had, but I was afraid to ask to borrow it. So, eh, uh...sorry about that.'³ Besides drinking and smoking marijuana at the time, he admitted, he was also quite promiscuous:

When I was at school I had *so* many girlfriends...., at least one in each of the twelve divisions of the class. Girls sometimes like boys like me just because they are mischievous [*vane musikanzwa*], I guess. I was known for it: 'that guy is a *hure* [i.e. a promiscuous person, 'whore', normally a term reserved for loose women], people said. Even the male teachers knew it. Some asked me, 'help me arrange something with that girl', you know, the ones in our class.

This collection of untoward behaviour saw him being shuttled between relatives as each progressively grew tired of his

antics. Eventually, none wanted him around and he was forced to sleep at a friend's house while scrounging for food during the day. Having 'learned a lesson', as he said, he returned to his mother's home in the rural areas (his father died when he was a child). He quit drinking and smoking and temporarily joined an apostolic church. Visibly reformed, he returned to town, renegotiated his relationship with his brothers, and began his 'A' level studies. When the brother sponsoring him lost his formal sector job, though, he was forced to stop, and he subsequently began informal trading in earnest. He specialized in selling cell-phones that were, as he put it, 'probably stolen...but not by me!'—his mother seems to have prophesied that a life of theft would lead to his death. By 2006, wage labour was increasingly looked down upon in Zimbabwe—'you pay more in bus fares than you earn in a month'. 'Those who are a bit older', he observed:

...they prepared [*vakagadzira*] their lives long ago, so that even if they don't have work, they have somewhere to start. A house, whatever. They just need to look for money for food. But our 'age' [English], we have nothing to start with, nowhere to even begin. Nothing. Really.

In the months to come, Zimbabwe's fast expanding parallel economy exposed young people like Okocha to unexpected possibilities. First, diamonds were discovered in an area within walking distance of his rural home, and he followed many of his friends and relatives to join in the burgeoning illegal trade. He did not dig, choosing instead to engage in an elaborate barter system whereby he would source consumer goods in town, trade them for diamonds, immediately sell those diamonds, then use the money to begin the cycle again. By late 2007, the diamond fields were becoming increasingly dangerous, fewer people were managing to find diamonds, and his profits were drying up. He briefly tried his hand at smuggling used clothes, shoes and basic commodities from Mozambique, but quickly grew tired of that as well. He then returned to Chitungwiza where he became an illegal dealer of foreign currency. This trade yielded reasonable profits—though not nearly as much, he claimed, as some people thought.⁴

Like most young people in the area, Okocha was a nominal supporter of the opposition, but he paid scant regard to

party matters. Nonetheless, in the run-up to the presidential run off in June, 2008, he was repeatedly threatened with beatings, and was robbed of nearly US\$300 (his 'capital') by thugs hired by the ruling party. The 'black market' in foreign currency was repeatedly denounced as a weapon of 'sell-outs' seeking to effect 'illegal regime change'. In one encounter, Okocha got into an argument with a female government supporter who threatened to kick him out of his 'workplace' (which was actually just a parking lot). A *melée* broke out, and a crowd beat up the woman. Concluding quite reasonably that there would be police/militia retaliation, Okocha ran away to a relative's house and spent the next two weeks in hiding. When he told me the story a month later, he did so in a whisper, and he furtively handed me a 'diary' of events that I had asked him to keep. 'After the first few days of writing, I was afraid to write anymore,' he said, adding that he had hidden the papers in the roof rafters, in case somebody came to abduct him (as they had recently done to his brother). In his diary he writes of the fight with the woman:

How could she say that kind of shit [i.e. threaten to eject him from his 'workplace']? She thinks people like us, young as we are, would like to stand on that fucken open space, bad or good weather, [carrying] big [satchels] with [heaps] of cash which does not even buy a 14 inch colour TV.⁵ We are just people left with nothing to do but work for food only (*sic*).

This is a striking distillation of youth and blocked accumulation. In many ways, Okocha is the paradigmatic African youth we read about. Twenty-four years old, perched between desires for a better life and the hard realities of 'this fucken open space', every day he wakes up and sets about navigating the perilous struggle for survival. He has smuggled goods, jumped borders, participated in the bush economy in illicit minerals, made his money from illegal foreign currency dealing, and fought in violent political battles. He has, by his own account, led a life of sexual promiscuity and drunken misbehaviour. He has dabbled into popular religion, has been alienated from, then reconciled with, extended family. He has gone hungry, knowing that his education will prove useless in securing a decent job. He lives hand to mouth in a deeply troubled economy, at the margins of the margins.

Only one detail does not fit the 'African youth' mold: Okocha is married, to a high-school sweetheart. And he has a baby son, on whom he dotes. Back in 2006, I had asked if he had given up his promiscuous ways after high school. 'I have a girlfriend now', he replied, somewhat dodging the question, 'and I love her. She's doing form four.⁶ I even want to marry her.'

'So what's stopping you?', I asked.

'Well, maybe in a few years, when I've managed to get something'.

'What do you mean, 'something'?' I pressed.

Something like money, you know. And steady work. A room of my own. And the basic things in a house. How can you get married if you don't even have your own two plate stove? Or a bed?

I had to remind him of this plan two years later, when, right there in the middle of his street 'workplace', he told me he had been a 'run away to' [*kutizirwa*], i.e. he had eloped with his girlfriend, who was pregnant. Although his foreign currency dealings had provided him with enough money to buy a number of household assets, he was still living with relatives, and did not plan the marriage. 'Yeah, well, I knocked her up [*kumumitisa*],' he admitted, quickly adding that it was the same girl that he had always wanted to marry, so he was not too worried. 'It was just fast-tracked', he joked, referencing the accelerated pace—and perhaps the barely managed chaos—of the Zimbabwean government's post-2000 'fast-track land reform'. His trading partner, looking on, paused in the middle of counting a stack of several thousand local Zimdollars, then blurted out: '*Marriage?* Marriage just falls on you [*zvinongokuwira*].⁷ There's nothing you can do about it'.

Whether this confirms the supposed 'fatalism' of African youth is difficult to say. It clearly does not confirm the claim that they are failing to marry. On the contrary, marriage is just 'falling' on them. In fact, this sort of *fait accompli* marriage, established in the wake of an unplanned pregnancy, is so common for township residents that it is arguably the statistical norm. Still, it is not taken as 'normal'. I will discuss the complicated ethnographic context in greater detail below. To begin with, I simply want to note that a reading of the African youth literature certainly would not prepare one for such a messy reality. An extreme reading might come to

the conclusion that African youth are no longer marrying or forming independent households at all. This unmarried status, moreover, seems to be the source of many of their problems.

Take, for instance, the Donal Cruise O'Brien's seminal discussion of West Africa's 'Lost Generation' (1994). 'A generational contrast,' he notes:

...can thus be made between those who grew to adulthood in the first two decades of African independence (1960-1980) and their successors who see their 'youth' as something which is at risk of becoming indefinitely prolonged. This contrast has its material definition: economic independence, to have enough resources to marry and set up one's own family, is the fundamental aspiration of youth, in West Africa as elsewhere in the world (p.58).

Already, here we have connections being drawn between generation and an economic predicament that mirror Okocha's commentary: youth lack a 'place to start' when it comes to starting their own households, and in a strong sense, their own lives. O'Brien continues:

...there is often to be heard a contrast of today's hard times with the relatively prosperous circumstances in which one's parents grew to adulthood—and set up their independent households...With a shrinking number of viable new independent households, however, anchored in some sort of secure employment for the head of the household, one must see the future as dark enough. This would appear to be a liminal generation, on the edge of what can become a social collapse, as in Liberia and a number of other state situations where violence tears at the fabric of social relations (p.57).

Marriage and the creation of independent households by his account are not only the lynchpin for youth futures, but for societal stability more generally. It is the inability of youth to fulfill these sorts of normative transitions that makes them liminal and dangerous. It is almost as if the whole contemporary predicament of youth could be solved if those transitions were made possible once again.

A disturbingly similar point is made by Robert Kaplan, in his infamous 1994 article, 'The Coming Anarchy' (1994):

Every time I went to the Abidjan bus terminal, groups of young men with

restless, scanning eyes surrounded my taxi...In cities in six West African countries, I saw similar young men everywhere—hordes of them. They were like loose molecules in a very unstable social fluid, a fluid that was clearly on the verge of igniting...Most... [were said to subscribe to] animist beliefs not suitable to a moral society, because they are based on irrational spirit power. They were from 'extended' families, with a mother in one place and a father in another. Translated to an urban environment, loose family structures are largely responsible for the world's highest birth rates and the explosion of the HIV virus on the continent. Like the communalism and animism, they provide a weak shield against the corrosive social effects of life in cities.

Cruise O'Brien would no doubt shudder at the mention of 'irrational spirit power' and 'loose family structure'—both well-worn racist canards—and he would likely deplore Kaplan's charged language of 'hordes' of unstable young men. Still, in his own rabid way, Kaplan pushes some commonly-held positions to the fore, and Cruise O'Brien's argument runs dangerously close to repeating them. First, the metaphors of 'instability', 'looseness' and 'igniting' point to widely-held perception that African youth are not just dangerous, but dangerously under-socialized (i.e. dangerous because they are undersocialized) (Comaroff and Comaroff 2005). It is not only dowdy armchair critics like Kaplan who think so. Popular rhetoric on youth is constructed in much the same terms across the continent. Second, it is quite clear that the real target of analysis is young, *unmarried men*. They are the 'African youth' in question, and being unmarried is a crucial piece of the puzzle. This is clear in Cruise O'Brien as well. When he says that 'secure employment for the head of household' is needed for it to be 'viable', it is not likely that he has market women in mind. After all, it is not unmarried young women—or women of any sort—who threaten society with violence. Third, one again gets the sense that the proliferation of violence and undomesticated sex and consumption might be stemmed by (re)creating a particular form of household organization. Kaplan goes on, for instance, to suggest that all of these tensions of youth are greatly lowered in 'genuinely' Islamic countries,⁸ where 'education and indoctrination' confine young men (and young women, of course) to ordered domesticity.

The quality of Cruise O'Brien's analysis clearly cannot be equated with that of Kaplan. Several factors separate them, not the least of which is the fact that the former's knowledge of West Africa exceeds that of a frightened tourist. They do, however, both come to similar conclusions about the relationship between African youth, marriage and household, and social order. And they are not alone in doing so. We know that many Africans share the sense that disordered households are to blame for the current problems of both youth and society more generally, and they voice this complaint in a variety of religious, 'traditional', or even secular registers. This presents a scholarly problem: how to capture these anxieties without allowing our work to take similar form. Consider what I take to be three excellent discussions of the contemporary state of African youth. First, Adeline Masquelier, writing of Niger (2005):

There is a growing sense that today's youth are facing a crisis of unprecedented proportions. This 'crisis' centres on their inability to marry and achieve full social seniority. Marriage in Mawri society is a critical rite de passage indexing the transition from childhood to maturity...To become adults, both boys and girls must marry: non-marriage is simply not an acceptable option...Before a boy and girl can tie the knot, however, bride-wealth...must be exchanged...In today's circumstances of dwindling economic opportunities and ever escalating inflation, young men without the means to marry find themselves condemned to a kind of limbo life. In this situation of prolonged immaturity, they are defined as superfluous and non-adult... (p. 59).

Then take Karen Tranberg Hansen's discussion of 'compound' life in Lusaka (1992):

I suggest that...young people are not so much a 'lost generation' as they are a segment of the population of whom many in fact might never become adult in a normative social and cultural sense. As in much of the rest of the southern African region, for men in Zambia, the attributes of adulthood include a job, a house or flat of one's own, and a spouse and children—in short, the ability to be in charge as household heads. Adulthood for women is differently constructed: it revolves around childbearing and is not necessarily linked to

cohabitation or marriage. Thus, men remain young much longer than women...What does it mean for the reproduction of the social order if a considerable proportion of young people remain 'youth forever'? (pp. 4-5).

Finally, note the position of de Boeck and Honwana in their general introduction to studies of African youth (2005):

...a growing number of children and youth in contemporary Africa are excluded from education, healthcare, salaried jobs, and even access to an adult status, given their financial incapacity to construct a house, formally marry and raise children in turn (p. 9)

I could multiply examples. All of these accounts exceed even Cruise O'Brien in their depth, and none even approaches the race-baiting of Kaplan. Yet, all suggest that the inability to marry and form households is crucial to any proper understanding of contemporary African youth. The first two even suggest that in the places of which they write the formation of independent households (in the wake of marriage) is seen as constituting the end of youth. This is clearly very important to our subject. And again, Okocha would no doubt agree on all counts. But what are the stakes—and the dangers—of our continuing to make these claims as scholars? Although few accounts come out and say it, it seems that the nagging question of social order still lurks in the corners of our analyses.

I want to suggest that we are still beholden by degree to two major assumptions. First, the household is often taken to be the source of social value, which is then encompassed and managed by the public sphere. This is, in fact, a very old idea, dating in the West at least as far back as Aristotle.⁹ As feminist scholars have repeatedly shown, it is both inescapably gendered in theory and distinctly *non-universal* in historical terms (Amadiume 1997; Collier and Yanagisako 1987; Oyewumi 1997). It is, in short, a folk ideology of 'Western' society. This is not to say it is not constantly invoked or reworked in other places. Indeed, it seems quite clear that capitalism writ large operates on a very similar model: a public sphere of 'work' composed of men, and a domestic sphere of reproduction composed of women and children. Wherever capitalism travels, some might say, it carries the seeds of a particular view of household with it (see Collier and Yanagisako

1987). More importantly, it continues to inform our theories of capitalism and ‘modernity’ more broadly. That makes its re-appearance in our own work more difficult to avoid. Having said that, these universalizing pretences of household formation have been repeatedly disproved. For instance, James Ferguson (1999) has convincingly demonstrated that assumptions about proletarian household formation on the Zambian Copperbelt were both misplaced and inaccurate. African households there as elsewhere were rarely, if ever, made up of a nuclear family with a male breadwinner and female homemaker. Any conceptual apparatus that starts with that model of marriage or household, he argues, is bound to fail in its efforts to capture the reality of Copperbelt life. Much the same, I think, could be said of position of the household in the youth literature: left underspecified, it reproduces a picture of domesticity that is ideologically wrought. In fact, it is likely that the proletarianizing population that Zambian colonial officials fretted about is the very same ‘youth’ population we discuss. All that separates them, really, is a wage.

The second assumption, tied to the first, has to do with the question of social persistence. Here, the spirit of Durkheim reigns, and with it a mythography of society as a set of enduring institutions through which new individuals must continually cycle, lest the ‘whole damn thing’ fall apart (Fortes 1970). Although the classic structural-functionalist literature on Africa is a key site for this sort of idea, there are also well-attested Marxian and structuralist variants (Meillassoux 1981; Lévi-Strauss 1970, see discussion of latter in Mudimbe, 1988). The reproduction of social institutions from this perspective is ‘mechanical’, to borrow the Durkheim’s terminology (Durkheim 1933). Society *sui generis* is constantly acting to perpetuate itself, and the social action of real live agents is ever-gearred towards that end. This approach has been endlessly critiqued, but here it is particularly useful to revisit Bourdieu’s assessment, which tellingly also begins with marriage and household (Bourdieu 1977). The language of structure, Bourdieu argues, promotes a ‘synchronic illusion’ that effectively eliminates real duration from our accounts. Matters that are in practice unidirectional and dependent on the movement of time—like marriage and household formation—are made to seem

‘timeless’ and reversible. This illusion has an important effect on perceptions of youth. Youth is most often considered in temporal terms, as one phase in the progression of an individual life—from childhood to youth to adulthood to senescence. But in the Durkheimian model, this progression is spatialized, turned into a structure that can be glimpsed in a single chart or graph, and social adulthood is made its core, the pinnacle from which one ascends or descends. In that structure, youth are almost always seen to lie in the spaces *between* households: their own, through marriage, and that of their parents. This makes their status as ‘people in the process of becoming rather than being’, as Honwana and de Boeck (2005: 3) put it, over-determined, because they are quite literally ‘between’ categorization and therefore liminal by definition. The gap is all the more glaring when it cannot be filled by further transcendent institutions, like school or religion (as is the case in much of Africa).

On one hand, this positioning makes it inevitable that young people’s inability to reach the institutional permanence of household and marriage will be seen as a crisis: if society is taken as the reproduction of enduring institutions, it *has* to be a crisis. They never actually reach the state of true being. On the other hand, it also explains why the presence of young people in public evokes moral panic: they have entered it through the back door, without having first been domesticated (literally) by a stable household (Diouf 2003; Biaya 2005). A good comparison might be the ‘floating population’ [*population flottante*] that has so vexed colonial and postcolonial west African governments (Roitman 2005). As with youth, the ‘problem’ is as much epistemological as real. It consists of an inability to pin a population down to a proper place, to find a handle on them that exceeds the ephemeral actions of individuals. Such a population threatens not just social order, but the very *notion* of social order, and with it a whole model of governance, intervention and control.

This takes us into deep theoretical water, and I think it bears exploring further the manner in which household formation holds an entire theoretical apparatus together. For now, though, my point is more specific: how do these assumptions distort our understanding of African youth? What is lost if we slip into analyses premised on a synchronic illusion? Next, I want

to come back to Okocha and youth marriage in Zimbabwe and discuss two key oversights/absences. They are difficult to catch in part because the ideology of ‘tradition’ is built on very similar assumptions.

As I noted, despite conforming to many stereotypes of ‘African youth’, Okocha is also married and a father. He even has an ‘independent household’, or what passes for one in a Zimbabwean township. Together with his wife and child, he rents a single room that serves simultaneously as a bedroom, a kitchen, and a place for receiving guests. Prior to marriage, his wife lived with a maternal aunt. Her parents divorced long ago, and her father, who lives elsewhere in the country, has played little role in her life. Her mother immigrated to the UK nearly ten years ago. These circumstances, which are not unusual, presented Okocha with a number of challenges. Upon learning that his girlfriend was pregnant, he was expected to notify her family with a small payment (see below for detail), but he was not sure who to give it to. In the end, he gave it to the aunt, even though as a member of the mother’s lineage, she had no official standing. Similarly, he struggled to figure out to whom to give bridewealth. He wanted to pay, as is the case with the majority of young men I spoke to: ‘you can’t just stay with someone else’s child [*mwana wemuridzi*] for free’, he explained. By the time he figured out how to split payment in a manner that was amicable to all parties, though, his job of selling illegal foreign currency suddenly disappeared, and his accumulated savings were soon exhausted.¹⁰ That means that nearly two years on, he has only provided a few small token payments of bridewealth, and has no real plan as to when the process will go forward. Yet to him, and most of the people he meets on a daily basis, he is ‘married’. He has good relations with his wife’s family; in fact his mother-in-law (in the UK) provided him with the start-up capital he used to begin dealing in foreign currency, and they regularly pay for his wife’s medical costs. Is all of this ‘typical’? Statistically, yes. Nothing in this story would come as a shock to residents of Harare’s townships. Normatively, though—that is the question that will detain us here.

Before I give an account of what is often *said* to be ‘typical’, let me be clear: this is a description of an ideology, as any description of laws or rules would be. It is noteworthy, however, that many local,

everyday accounts of 'Shona' marriage proceed as if there is some stable group called the 'Shona' (Ranger 1989) and as if widely recognized forms of Shona marriage describe reality and *not* an ideology built on top of it. People insist that certain ways of marrying are characteristic of *chivanhu chedu* or *ChiShona chedu*.¹¹ These categories have deep institutional roots, many of which stem directly from colonial attempts to create order and/or anthropological attempts to find it. As has been discussed in contexts elsewhere on the continent (e.g. Chanock 1985), 'customary law' is a key site for this sort of ideological reproduction, and in that sense, government officials have long been particularly concerned with matters having to do with marriage and household. In Zimbabwe, ideology of this kind is also deeply entrenched in the vernacular language school curriculum, which is premised on a Herderian identification of a language with a clearly demarcated population and their shared practices, i.e. 'culture' (Kuper 1999; Bauman and Briggs 2000; Bakare-Yusuf 2004). In a sense, then, if scholars of today confuse the ideology of marriage and household formation with its reality, they are only following local practice.

So: 'Shona' marriage, ideologically rendered.¹² The Shona are organized into exogamous patrilineal descent groups marked by shared clan names (a 'totem' symbolized by an animal or part thereof). Marriage to anyone sharing the totem of either parent is considered incest (although ritual means can be used to overcome this rule where an actual relationship cannot be traced). Cousin marriage of any sort is not allowed. Clans/totems do not have a political function *per se*, though they may be seen as autochthonous in particular political/geographical regions. Effective decisions are made by more local lineage groups—often no deeper than three generations, and generally limited to relatively 'close' cognates. Certain regions—rather than clans—are associated with particular patterns or practices of marriage, but all are generally considered to fall under the 'Shona' umbrella. Marriage (a man marries, *kuroora*, while a woman is married, *kuroorwa*)¹³ is considered to be the joining of two families, not just a couple. The phrase often used is *kubatanidza ukama*, that is, 'putting together' kin relations. Wife-givers are taken to be superior to wife-takers, and this hierarchy holds in perpetuity. It is built into

forms of address, and a man is supposed to defer to any and all of his male in-laws (including those of his own and following generations). Particularly strict relations hold with his mother-in-law (as well as classificatory mothers-in-law). A wife, on the other hand, maintains the patriline of her father, and is something of a 'foreigner' in the house of her husband. In rural settings, residence is most often patrilocal.

Marriage can take one of five forms: marriage by request, pledge-marriage, service-marriage, and two forms of elopement: planned and unplanned. The first is the norm from which the others depart. It begins with a boy and girl exchanging love tokens, which may later be taken as proof of intent.¹⁴ Then the girl's paternal aunt is informed. She is expected to act as an intermediary, conveying the message to the men of her lineage. The boy likewise informs his father and chooses his own intermediary (or intermediaries). The girl's family sets a date, and the boy and company proceed to her father's home, where the bridewealth exchanges take place. Often, these are carried out without the presence of either the boy or the girl, who are only allowed in a specific junctures. There are a number of initial 'token' payments—paying to sit, to open one's mouth, to say who one is, to request a bowl in which payments are made, etc. These are relatively small in value, and are always paid in cash. Larger payments follow, though the order and composition may vary. First is the payment of *rutsambo* (literally a type of basket). Customary law considers this to be payment for conjugal rights. In the past, this may have been a hoe or some other material object. Now it almost always consists of cash; amounts of several thousand US dollars or equivalent are not uncommon. Next is the payment of the mother's cow (*mombe youmai*). This is supposed to be a real cow, not money, though it is left to the mother to decide. It is surrounded by a good deal of mystical sanction. Not giving it will cause the mother to haunt the son-in-law after her death. Equally, no members of the patrilineage may lay claim to it. After that comes the '*danga*' (the kraal), a payment denominated in cattle (whether actual or in cash form) to the girl's father. *Danga* is considered to confer rights to the children of a marriage. As such, it is rarely paid in full before there is proof of the girl's fertility. Indeed, it is rare for a son-in-law to pay all of the different

aspects of bridewealth in one sitting, and to try to do so would be considered rude. Each is expected to leave with a debt to the father-in-law (*chikwereti chababa*). Finally, at a later date, when the first child of the marriage is about to be born, a further payment is made—*kusungira* (tying). This payment is normally a goat or its monetary equivalent. It is intended to cleanse the girl's parents of the pollution of having foreign blood introduced into their house.

The other forms of marriage alter this central exchange process in one way or the other. In the case of the pledge-marriage, a female child (born or unborn) is pledged to a family (not necessarily a particular man) in exchange for material support of some kind, or otherwise in order to cement an existing relationship. Service marriage, on the other hand, entails a sort of payment in kind: instead of establishing his own home or other patrifocal residence, as is the norm, a man moves to his father-in-law's home and works for him for a period of years before being given a wife. In both cases, token payments may still be exchanged, but there is no exchange of *rutsambo* or *danga*. Then come the two forms of elopement. The first, called *kutizisa* (causative, 'make run'), involves the planned abduction of the girl from her home, with her consent (and often with the knowledge of her mother or aunts). Shortly afterward—one to two days—a messenger is sent by the groom to inform the girl's family of her whereabouts with a small token payment (called variously *tsvagirai kuno*—'look for her here'—and *svevedzera*—to call, notify). Although the marriage may in theory be rejected, it is normally taken as *fait accompli* and the girl's family will open up negotiations that follow the pattern outlined above. The second form of elopement, called *kutizira* ('run away to') is considered an 'act of desperation' on the part of the girl. Normally, she is pregnant and 'runs away to' the person she considers to be the 'owner' of the pregnancy (*muridzi wenhumbu*). Again, if he accepts responsibility (the majority of the cases?), he then sends a messenger with *tsvagirai kuno/svevedzera*, and the exchanges follow the normal model—with the exception that he is charged 'damages' (the English word is often used) for having 'broken the law' (*kupara mhosva*) and made the girl pregnant. In all of the different forms, the *kusungira* payment (before first birth) is expected.

In cases of inter-ethnic marriage, a Shona man will defer to the demands of his non-Shona in laws, and conversely a non-Shona man will be expected to follow *chiShona* procedures. In all cases, I should note, civil or church marriage plays an accessory role. Most churches, even the most hardcore of the Pentecostals, allow or even encourage the payment of bridewealth, although they may try to regulate the form that it takes and the amounts that are paid. Even those churches that do not allow it (some apostolic groups, for instance) seem to only enforce the ban when both families belong to the same church. Many church marriages take place years after the customary one, even after children have grown up and left home. Sometimes, an additional payment must be made before such a marriage takes place. Zimbabwean law caters for two types of registered unions: civil and customary, the former of which can be done in a church or a court. These have different legal implications, particularly with regard to inheritance and the practice of polygyny. Nonetheless, many if not most marriages go entirely unregistered (Ncube 1997).

So much for the ideology. As is clear, it repeats quite thoroughly the form of the Durkheimian model: enduring institutions, cemented by ritual (ritual payments in this case), through which generations of people are intended to cycle. It is an ideology that is widely accepted, even by young people. Now, something closer to reality. What does this account prevent us from seeing?

1. Young people are getting married, but their marriages are seen as non-normative.

Very few contemporary marriages follow the normative model of request. As one woman put it to me, 'you actually get shocked [*kurohwa nehana*] if you hear of someone marrying "properly" these days.' In my long-time dealings with married young men, no more than one in ten have followed the 'proper' procedures of request. Those that do are generally avid church-goers (creating the somewhat ironic situation whereby churches are the most consistent enforcers of 'tradition'). Two of the above marriage types are essentially moribund: pledge-marriage, technically against the law, still operates clandestinely, particularly in some apostolic religious communities, but it is relatively rare, while service-marriages seemed to have disappeared from the

realm of possibility with the spread of wage labor; one would be hard-pressed to find anyone (in urban areas especially) with a living memory of the practice. This leaves elopement. In point of fact, few young people consistently distinguish between *kutizira* and *kutizisa*, and I have never heard of anyone who followed the elaborate staged kidnapping procedures that supposedly characterize the latter. *Kutizira* is the most commonly used term (or *kutizirana*, the reciprocal, lit. 'running away to each other'), and it carries with it a suggestion of desperation.

To what does such desperation owe? Amongst those living in 'townships', pregnancy-induced elopements like that of Okocha and his wife are the most common.¹⁵ This does not necessarily mean, however, that they are acts of shame-avoidance. Many young men even assert that they are unlikely to agree to a marriage unless there is proof of their wife's fertility. As one young man put it:

If a guy marries by properly requesting, you know, paying everything then having a church wedding, people here in the 'hood' laugh at him. 'How could you take and pay for a woman who hasn't made a kid for you yet? What if she can't conceive? Plus, you know she's going to get half of your stuff.' That's the way people actually talk.¹⁶

When asked, on the other hand, whether a young man suffered any negative reaction from his peers if he made a girl pregnant, young men typically answered that as long as he was out of school and the girl was not a known 'whore' [*hure*], or too old (which amounts to the same thing in the minds of many men),¹⁷ he would actually be congratulated by his peers. If they are desperate, then, it is more likely to be for financial reasons: can they support a wife and child, playing the 'breadwinner' role (see below), and can they manage to pay bridewealth 'properly' before the pregnancy is detected by his in-laws, as such a discovery will add a substantial fine to the final price. For the girl, of course, reactions depend a great deal on whether she can force the hand of the child's father. If she cannot find a man to both accept responsibility for the pregnancy and take her in as a wife, her social status will drop considerably in many eyes. If she manages to marry, however, she loses little unless she had some other very concrete plan for the immediate future. Having a child is actually an important part of being seen as a real woman.

Pregnancy is not the only reason for eloping, though. For instance, women and girls claim that they may '*tizira*' in order to escape a bad home situation. Poverty tops the list, but they also mention sexual and physical abuse, being overworked, or simply lack of space (having to share a single room with their parents and all their siblings, a common township experience). It is also quite common for a girl to be chased from her house by male relatives (fathers, brothers, uncles) if she returns home 'late' or is rumoured to be with a man. Finding herself in such a predicament, she 'runs away to' the house of the man in question. Whatever her reason, the elopement may or may not be done with the foreknowledge and consent of the partner. Girls are rumoured—even amongst themselves—to target men with money, someone who can 'support' them and get them 'nice' things. If they see that his attentions are flagging, they may allow themselves to get pregnant in order to force their position. Young men often set about eloping with similarly material matters in mind. Sometimes they do it intentionally to avoid the immediate payment of bridewealth (although not necessarily its eventual payment, as I said). 'It's like Nyore-Nyore [literally 'easy easy', a well-known Zimbabwean purchase-hire shop]' one young man commented, 'you get what you want now and pay later'. What they want, aside from sexual access and the status that goes along with being married and/or a father, is often quite simple: someone to cook and clean for them. There is also a measure of protecting one's turf. Many young men claimed to have eloped in order to prevent a girl that they loved from being stolen by some other man. Competition for girls still in high school can actually be quite fierce, particularly if they are considered beautiful, thoughtful, and 'well-mannered' [*ane tsika*]. Getting her pregnant is an almost certain way to ensure no one else takes her. Finally, of course, there are those cases where star-crossed lovers elope purely out of what they consider desperate love. Indeed, 'love' [*rudo*] and mutual understanding [*kuwirirana*] cannot be dismissed in many instances of elopement, but as I will discuss below, it is a mistake to separate these sentiments from material considerations.

Nearly everyone I spoke with claims that although elopements occurred in the past, the practice has become 'too much' [*kunyanya*] these days, particularly in

town (although many add that the situation is no different in rural areas). It is difficult to know what to make of this assertion. Lacking statistical proof—and that is not forthcoming, given that up till today surveys reduce the intricacies of local marriage forms to a simple yes or no—one can only speculate. The historical literature shows that both ‘disordered’ marriages and anxieties about them have been a key part of the Zimbabwean landscape since the onset of colonial rule. Moreover, some people recognize that the practice of elopement is not ‘natural’; rather, it is learned from the environment in which one lives and grows up. Thus, people often remarked that ‘you learn about the levirate by seeing others do it’ [*kugara nhaka kuona dzavamwe*], a proverb suggesting that young people learn about the possibility of elopement from their elders. Moreover, the very fact that elopement is included in ideological accounts of marriage suggest that at least some people practised it long ago. Still, it is received ambivalently, as somehow both ‘traditional’ and new, proper and improper. One young man summed up the contradiction nicely by saying, ‘it is the common way here in the township for a girl to elope, but it is not the normal way to marry’.¹⁸ Another claimed in one breath that the prominence of elopement these days showed that ‘our traditions are dying’ [*chivanhu chedu cha’kupera*], but then in the next insisted that, no, elopement was a part of tradition [*aiwa, chirimo muchivanhu*]. Many believe that elopement brings shame on the families of those who do it, and particularly on the mother of the girl. When asked how they would advise their own children about marriage, everybody said that they would tell them to marry ‘properly’. When asked whether marriages that started with elopement were less stable than others, though, people claimed that they actually tended to be *more* stable.

How do we explain this incongruity? In one way, it can be ascribed to the fact that elopement blends almost imperceptibly into other forms of domestic and sexual union that *are* new. A number of scholars, for instance, have discussed the development and practice of ‘*mapoto*’ marriage (Barnes 1999; Rutherford 2001). This term literally refers to the illegitimate use of the woman’s domestic and reproductive services, i.e. literally her ‘pots’. It has a long history of practice in towns, commercial farms, and mining compounds.

Essentially, it is a temporary marriage, where both partners enjoy the various perks of marriage without there being any premise that the union will ever be officialized. Typically, no bridewealth payments at all are made, and oftentimes the male partner remains unknown to the female’s kin. Young urbanites tend to associate the term with older men who were married in a rural area but kept another household in town. Another more recent form, the ‘small house’¹⁹ is also associated with urban life—more specifically the monetary economy. Men with money keep ‘small houses’, paying the rent and expenses of a [typically younger] woman. Unlike in *mapoto* relationships, the couple do not usually live together for any extended period, but there may be children from the union. In both cases, *mapoto* and small house, space remains for the relationship to be ‘legitimated’, either through divorce of the first wife and remarriage, or through the practice of polygamy. In that sense, they are similar to *kutizira*—the intent to marry often taken to be as important as the actual practice.

The larger factor making elopement seem improper, however, is the manner in which ‘tradition’ itself is framed. First, tradition as normally invoked admits no ambiguity: cultural hierarchies and procedures must be reproduced exactly. Elopement troubles this imperative by forcing a post-facto reassessment of actions that constituted a ‘crime’ [*mhosva*] at the time they were committed. Especially if there is a pregnancy involved, it is clear: the man broke the law [*kupara mhosva*]. He must pay [*kuripa mhosva*] for his actions in order to realign himself with tradition and re-establish temporal continuity. Second, tradition is always said to be dying; we might even say that it is traditional to say that tradition is dying. This is an idea that completely saturates cultural discourse. It is built into vernacular media—music, novels, ritual speech forms, political rhetoric—as an almost incontestable proposition. Historical consciousness is structured in such a way that each generation is seen as departing from the traditions that were supposedly upheld by previous one, which in turn reflected timeless principles. Youth of yester-years, we hear, were not sexually promiscuous, and did not marry without their parents’ consent. The truth of this contention is less important than the version of history it seeks to buttress. It is certainly not unique to Zimbabwe; indeed, certain theorists

might insist that it is the very ideological structure of modernity and/or capitalism. Its links to colonialism are patent. That it should be applied to marriage and household is no surprise, given that both figure so crucially in life trajectories, interpersonal relations, gender identities and the construction of meaningful action. In short, young people are getting married, but they are doing so in a way that typical constructions of ‘tradition’ find difficult to absorb, even if it is itself ‘traditional’. Hence, their marriages do not ‘count’ normatively, even if they add up very quickly in a statistical sense. Amongst my friends and study informants, for instance, the number of men who are not married by their late twenties can be counted on one hand, but again, almost all of them begin their marriages by eloping.

Marriage is Composed by Ritual Exchange

It is well known that, together with ‘law’, Durkheim considered ritual to be a key site of social reproduction (Durkheim 1912). Not only does ritual endure, exceeding the life of individuals, it actually creates the ground for endurance by effecting functional integration and/or structural alignment. It operates in a performative fashion to ensure that relations are maintained and contingent tensions are absorbed and rechanneled to serve the social whole. With that in mind, discussions of marriage in Africa have long focused on marriage ritual (e.g. Radcliffe Brown and Ford 1950; Fortes 1969), seeing in it the ingredients for guaranteeing reproduction of the wider social order. The movement of bridewealth constitutes a telos of traditional society, establishing relations and roles within and between groups. Other conceptual approaches have followed this lead. Lévi-Strauss (1970), for instance, famously argued that marriage exchange constituted the very basis of culture, and Marxist anthropology made bridewealth payment the fulcrum of relations of exploitation in the so-called ‘kinship mode of production’ (Meillassoux 1981). Given their penchant for viewing society like organic Durkheimians, it is unsurprising that many Zimbabweans see the exchange of bridewealth in quite similar terms. It is often discussed in terms of the perceived clarity of relations; that is, payment is seen to be constitutive of both a particular social order and knowledge thereof. By paying bridewealth, a man effects an epistemological shift, effectively bringing

the whole social realm into focus (be it in terms of rights, roles, or expected trajectories, his own or others') (Comaroff 1980, 1987). In that sense, it is the ritual of bridewealth exchange that dissipates the ambiguity I just spoke of: without it, the ambiguity persists.

This is precisely the problem: people agree that aside from being more numerous, contemporary elopements alter the 'traditional' timing of payment. Even if there is intent to pay, most such marriages operate for months or years in a grey zone of recognition, where very little or no bridewealth has been paid. In the interim, social relations are muddled. The initial token payment of *tsvagirai kuno* is generally given, normally within a few days, although sometimes it takes much longer. This payment—as little as a dollar—is made together with a letter that details the suitor's name and address. Then, if the correct people can be called together—and as Okocha's case demonstrated, this is often problematic—a list of further demands will be given to the young man. Far from sitting down to pay it at one ritualized event, though, most young men either send payment in dribs and drabs, starting with the initial token fees, or put off payment to an unknown and distant date. Token payments are not considered adequate to cement relations, even if they are viewed positively as signs of good intentions. Until a certain threshold is surpassed, the status of the marriage remains uncertain: as a practical matter, the couple is known to be married by all of their kin; but in terms of customary 'law' [*mutemo*], the son-in-law remains a 'stranger', unable to interact with his in-laws as family.

Having said that, it is not as if people who have eloped wake up every day uncertain of who they are or whether or not they are married. The uncertainty is normative. For most people I talked to, matters of outstanding bridewealth payments are not the object of daily concern. They do think about them, and sometimes even discuss them with their partner, but for all intents and purposes, they consider themselves married and proceed with their lives as if that were the case. Only on certain occasions or with certain people do they feel otherwise. It is not just a matter of opinion, though. Rather, the strength and or status of a relation is also judged on exchanges that are more mundane than those associated with bridewealth: the exchange of food, services, money, clothes, and sex, to name only the most

prominent. This is true of all marriages, actually, and aptly describes a more general attitude people hold about kin relations. As a common proverb has it, kinship is like a half-cup; it is filled with food [*ukama igasva; humozadziswa nekudya*], i.e. kinship is as much constructed by everyday reciprocity as it is by transcendent matters of ritual and blood. The difference, perhaps, with elopements is that these sorts of exchanges are more than just 'half of the cup': without blood or payment to bind the relation, the give-and-take of daily life must take on a greater role.

These daily matters are voiced in two key areas: the negotiation of the breadwinner role and the management of household finances. Both are rendered largely in the language of gender: what a man as a husband and father is supposed to do, and what a wife as a woman and a mother is supposed to do. In the absence of tradition writ large, gender roles are the tradition that remains. Ensuring that they are followed becomes a major area of negotiation and contention. The male role as 'breadwinner' is considered 'traditional' in spite of the fact that it owes largely to the practice and imagination of wage labour.²⁰ Similarly, it persists in spite of the fact that such labour is at this point a distant dream for the vast majority of young township men (Jones in press; cf. Simone 2006). It is simply something that men expect and are expected to do within the context of a marriage. The 'bread' in question entails the provision of all basic necessities for the home (food, clothes, hygienic items, and rents/fees), as well as the purchase of larger assets like furniture, appliances, etc. Provision is understood by all involved to create a power relation: the one who gives has a degree of power over the receiver. The resultant hierarchy is not imagined as a challenge to love, though. Quite the opposite, many see 'love' as both thoroughly hierarchical and material: those on top show love via provision, particularly of material goods, and those below show love by obediently supporting their efforts (Cole and Thomas 2009, cf. Zelizer 2005). Consider the entry in Okocha's diary that directly precedes the one in which he details his violent political confrontation:

Today I'm happy becoz I've made a profit of R50.²¹ It's so pleasing becoz I can now buy better food for me and my wife. I can now afford to get her hair done at the hair salon. Something she had several asked 4 but I couldn't afford (sic).

This hierarchy does not go unchallenged though. In fact, although most people say that the management of household expenses should be handled openly and honestly between partners, fights over various forms of provision are extremely common. Young women often complain that their husbands either do not make enough money, or channel it to non-household ends, for instance alcohol-consumption outside the home (also a distinctly gendered activity) or support for other girlfriends. As one woman put it, men make an art of lying about where they spend their money. As a result, urban food budgets and other household expenses have long been supplemented—or outright paid—by the market or agricultural activities of women. Young men, on the other hand, are anxious about their wife's desire for consumer goods, and seek to control it by limiting her movement. 'If you have a wife', one commented:

you face peer pressure. If she hears that so and so had real tea, you know, with proper bread and margarine and milk and sugar, she's going to want that too. And if some guy says "I can get you that", she can even go with him. Those are the ones we call men, those ones buying sausage. So that's why you can't let your wife move around too much.

It is often suggested that women lack financial judgment as well. 'If someone comes down the street selling knives,' one complained to me, 'she'll buy it even though there's already a perfectly good one in the house'. Another observed:

If I have, say, five hundred dollars, I give her two to buy vegetables and cooking oil, then I keep two, then there's another hundred that I hide because if a woman of today sees it, it's a problem. She'll say, "oh, look at my hair, oh, I need new underwear, oh face cream, oh and the one for my legs".... Today's women look too much next door. They don't have focus or vision. They only see today.

Most galling, perhaps is wives' practice of channeling money or goods to their kin without their husbands' assent. In fact, many marital disputes over money centre on kin: how they should be received in the home, how much his should get, how much hers should get, etc. Matters of bridewealth, I should note, appear to be of secondary importance in such calculations and fights, if they matter at all. In-

deed, the everyday status and workings of marriage and household have little to do with 'transcendent' social structure or ritual, and everything to do with what we might call *practical* social structure and *interaction* ritual, following Bourdieu (1977) and Goffman (1983) respectively. 'Tradition' is a consideration, as is the imperative to reproduce it, but that reproduction cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, it never could.

The general picture I have been trying to paint is this. First, a methodological complaint. The normative demands of social adulthood are clearly important to the lives of youth, but they must be properly situated in a wider picture of how practical relations are formed on the ground. There, insofar as adulthood is made to hinge on marriage and household formation, many 'youth' have already 'graduated'. They just have not done so normatively. The problem for us, as analysts, arises when we emphasize the rules of social adulthood, without grasping that the persistence of those rules in the face of ongoing change is very much part of what has to be explained. Bourdieu (1977) terms it the 'tyranny of the rule', that is, the conceit that social order is composed of laws that can be studied and manipulated in a positivistic fashion. One corollary of abandoning that approach is that we have to reconsider whether 'tradition' was *ever* that stable. In a way, the paradigm of reproduction is impossible: contingency will always thwart efforts at exact mimesis of past procedures. Moreover, 'Shona' custom, if we can still call it that, is quite flexible to the ex-post-facto redefinition of events, suggesting that disorder of various sorts has long been a part of lived experience. It is likely, too, that the everyday components of youth marriages differ little from that of their parents and grandparents. The major difference is economic, not cultural.

Of course, the economic difference is substantial. This brings me to the second point: social order. I have tried to show that such order is really what is at stake when social adulthood is pegged to marriage and household formation. It is well and good to critique this somewhat parochial Western notion, but what is left in its place when we are done? The problem, as I see it, has two levels. First is an analytic challenge: if we cannot look to the household as a necessary unit of social composition, where should we look? What sort of model of society remains? Tied to this is a further challenge: can

normal people (like African youth) count on marriage and household as unit composing their own lives? I do not have the answer to either of these questions yet. There are several alternative views of social order. The old Maussian alternative to Durkheim—a society composed of group and individual exchanges—seems to be wearing thin. De Boeck (2005) suggests that everyday intra-household exchange like that which I discuss above has begun to crumble in contemporary Kinshasa, with troubling effects for children and youth. Social class, on the other hand—either as an analytic or as a reality—is difficult to apply to non-European contexts. Even where it does apply, it is hard to say exactly how youth might fit in. Do they comprise a class, as Marxist anthropology would have it? In truth, a good number seem to be nothing more than lumpen-proletarians, mere potatoes in a sack full of them, as Marx might put it. If we are actually interested in their lives, this dismissal will not take us far. On the other hand, it is troubling to say in Weberian fashion that society is just an amalgamation of individual actions, be they of youth or anyone else. Some discussions of Africa appear to try and bridge the gap by arguing that whereas African societies were Durkheimian and collective in the past, now they are Weberian and individualistic.

What remains? Following Abdou Maliq Simone (2004b), I suggest that the answer may lie in a reconsideration of provisionality itself. Simone acknowledges that youth face a difficult predicament:

Employment, marriage, raising a family are foreclosed for increasing numbers of youth. As such, the incessant provisionality of actions, identities, and social composition through which individuals attempt to eke out daily survival positions them in a proliferation of seemingly diffuse and discordant times. Without structured responsibilities and certainties, the places they inhabit and the movements they undertake become instances of disjointed histories—i.e. places subsumed into mystical, subterranean or sorcerous orders...prophetic or eschatological universes, highly localized myths that 'capture' the allegiances of large social bodies, or daily reinvented routines that have little link to anything... (p. 518).

At the same time, those very difficulties are turned into resources, not just for in-

dividual, day-to-day survival, but for the creation of a more lasting order:

Not only do individual residents circulate amongst each other, but the very meanings of their various points of anchorage—household, networks and livelihoods—must perform a kind of circulation as well. It is often unclear just who has the right and ability to do what. Once relied-upon forms of authority are increasingly unable to put their stamp on how daily life is to be enacted and understood. As a result, there is a pervasive anxiety on the part of urban residents as to who they can live and work with, who they can talk to and what kind of collective future they can anticipate (p. 519).

Where once there were 'relied-upon forms of authority' that determined a range of possible and impossible actions and personal/group trajectories, now there are temporary social formations, forged out of a mix of necessity ('survival positions') and ongoing desires for a better life for oneself and one's intimates, whatever that might entail. Can this model move us to a new level of analysis?

Notes

1. The literature is vast. For just some of the more famous accounts, see Evans Pritchard 1940; Fortes and Evans Pritchard 1940; Radcliffe Brown and Forde 1950; Radcliffe-Brown 1968; Fortes 1968; and Fortes 1970.
2. A pseudonym, though he does use a nickname from a famous African footballer.
3. Unless otherwise noted, all dialogue is translated from the original ChiShona (or more properly, a township lingua franca of Shona, English and slang). The marriage practices I will describe are also largely 'Shona' (Ranger 1989) and are hegemonic in and around Harare, despite the fact that a significant minority of township residents are of not of 'Shona' extraction (Yoshikuni 2007).
4. He claimed that for a street-level trader like him, an outright profit of R100 (US\$8) a day would be a stunning windfall. Other street traders provided similar figures. The profits were substantially higher for those further up the scale of the foreign currency trade.
5. The reference, of course, is to the sheer bulk of Zimbabwean cash, which for much of the past 3-4 years was counted in 'bricks' of 100 notes each.
6. Making her approximately 17-18 years old
7. This might also be translated as 'it just happens' i.e. without you having planned for

- it. 'Love' [rudo] is also often said to simply 'fall' on a person. As a much quoted proverb has it, *moyo muti unomera paunoda*—the heart, i.e. the center of love and emotion, is like a tree; it just grows wherever it wants.
8. The 'genuine' example he gives is Turkey. West African countries, though nominally associated with Islam, are far too inhibited by communalism and animism to be truly Muslim.
 9. Aristotle's views on 'natural production' and the evils of using money to make money stem from the same domestic/public divide; only the 'natural' sphere of the household (from whence we take our word 'economy') could produce legitimate value (Bloch and Parry 1989).
 10. Zimbabwe legalized the pricing and purchase of all items in foreign currency in early 2009. This made the black market redundant, as very few people had any further dealings in Zimdollars.
 11. The translation here is a bit tricky. *ChiShona chedu* might be translated as 'our Shona-ness', in the abstract. ChiShona is literally the term for the language, Shona, showing the degree to which a language and a people have come to be seen as the same (Kuper 1999). *Chivanhu chedu*, or simply *chivanhu*, literally refers to a form of shared humanity (*vanhu* being the plural 'people'). In everyday conversation, it is understood as referring to the ways or customs of 'Shona' people (which are sometimes prefaced *tsika nemagariro*, figuratively ways and customs, but derived from words for walking and sitting), including negative ones like witchcraft. See the development of a similar categorization amongst Tswana speakers in Comaroff and Comaroff 1992.
 12. The following account is derived from a number of anthropological sources: Holleman 1952, Gelfand 1965; Kuper et al 1954; and Bourdillon 1987. Several vernacular language accounts seem to draw directly from these earlier works. Meekers 1993 offers a critique of certain aspects of the received model. In addition, there are several historical accounts that show the rise of particular forms of marriage and domesticity: Jeater 1993; Barnes 1999; West 2002 and Kaler 2003. For more on domesticity, see also Hansen 1992.
 13. A similar linguistic pattern holds with synonyms like *kuwana* (lit. 'to find'): a man 'finds' and a woman is 'found'.
 14. Following the standard literature, I use 'boy' and 'girl' intentionally here. The reality of cross-generational marriages is patent, and even amongst 'youth' the male tends to be at least several years older than the female
 15. Many of them insist that the situation is no different in rural areas but I cannot corroborate that claim.
 16. The second reference is to inheritance procedures (see Ncube and Stewart 1995). A legal marriage provides the woman with a right to inheritance, whereas so-called 'non-registered customary unions' tend to grant inheritance to the patriline.
 17. A woman who reaches her mid-twenties without being married is considered suspect, perhaps even by her own relatives, although there are important class differences to take into account. Put bluntly, older women are expected to have had more sexual partners.
 18. 'Common' and 'normal' are in English in the original, viz 'It's the common way *muline kuti muskana atizire* yet it is not normal way *yekuroora*.'
 19. The English is normally used, although the vernacular *imba diki*, a direct translation, is also used. The origin of the term and practice are both unknown, but it should be noted that an institution with the same or similar name has existed in many other places. Cf. *la casa pequeña* in Latin America (Gutmann 1996).
 20. Such labour is 'traditional' only in the sense that it has been a part of the Zimbabwean landscape for a hundred years or so (Raftopoulos and Yoshikuni 1999). It is clearly not timeless, though people quite often read its structure back into precolonial history, as if precolonial men went out of the house every day to search for money or food. Notably, the English term is always used. While breadwinning is often considered the responsibility of the head of the household (*musoro weimba* or, alternatively, *samusha*) this position was not always concerned with the provision of food, nor was there a pre-wage labour monetary economy of such a size as to warrant an ideological role of that sort.
 21. Fifty (South African) rands, worth approximately US\$8 at the time.
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CODESRIA Planning Workshop: Children and Youth Programme – A Few Reflections and Suggestions

To start with, I would like to give a few contemporary and theoretical insights into the area of childhood and youth research. These guidelines might document the programme and place it in the context of contemporary debates, putting into perspective the contributions and innovations that the programme should be able to generate. These contemporary and theoretical insights highlight the inextricable links between theory (concepts), methodology and policies.

1. A review of contemporary work on childhood and youth classifies the contemporary concepts, feeding contemporary productions in this area into three types or categories (Bluebond-Langner & Korbin 2007):
 - i) *Childhood* - youth as a social and discursive space. An object of dispute and power.
 - ii) *Children* - youth as a more or less homogenous sociological group.
 - iii) *Child* - youth as an individual interacting with other individuals and as a source of experiences.
2. Criticism of representation and the heritage from literary criticism and "*linguistic turn*" in social science now recognise childhood and youth as constructed concepts, as being in permanent and emerging construction in the social structure; meaning a construction in which the "agents" so objectivised participate (Diouf 2003).
3. An old/new perspective is making a comeback on the front stage, that is, the "*culture & personality*" school (Quinn 2005). To me, this kind of interrogation becomes relevant by the very use that photography's famous representatives like M. Mead and G. Bateson made of it and by the link they have established between culture and an individual; despite the efforts mostly concentrated on these two concepts, they still constitute a source of many problems, as evidenced by the work developed under the aegis of the programme.

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4. I personally believe that a pragmatic approach involving rigorous empiric methods allows for the theoretical creativity required for the programme (Hasturp 2005).

The Challenges of a Childhood and Youth Research Programme in Africa

By identifying different categories of challenges, my intention is not to overlook the indissociable nature of point of views (theory, method, policy); however, this categorisation should make challenge operationalisation easier, leading to the adoption of concrete measures.

These challenges are identified through reading, participation in some programme activities as well as the discussions held and papers presented during the conference.

Disciplines

Programme renovation could be oriented through an obvious criterion. Or the criterion might at least constitute a focal point among others (themes, methods, comparison ...). The purpose is not to reproduce an objectivising construction of humanities, but it is necessary instead to encourage disciplinary integrations and hybridization. And yet, since researchers give themselves disciplinary identities reproducing in so doing the barriers and limits specific to mainstream academic institutions, it is important to see to it that more space is granted to all researchers. It is also clear that some phenomena traditionally falling within the realm of certain disciplines have not been fully exploited (or have been ignored by childhood and youth researchers), or their theoretical framework and methods have not been fully developed. One example is psychology, the private life of young children, personal experiences and their multiple consequences ... Additionally, existing

work prove beyond any doubt that children and youth's actions produce current society, its materiality and imagination. (de Boeck & Honwana 2005).

At the Institutional Level

At the institutional level, the main challenges are: relevance of research development support modalities, quality of accompaniment and monitoring, formation of a critical mass of researchers and productions, CODESRIA's capacity, research ethics and dialogue with other institutions and crafts.

Promotion Tools: My knowledge of CODESRIA's tools is not enough to make relevant proposals. However, as far as the modes of collective work used in different activities are concerned, new more result-oriented methods, based on clearly defined issues, should be experimented. These working methods adapted to collective work project should be combined with the traditional academic conference (under the guidance of a senior, presentation of papers assembled per subject and/or themes with comments/questions from the audience and answers by the speakers and closing by organiser).

The quality of accompaniment and monitoring is a central issue and should start as from researchers' first meetings. The focus of attention is primarily practice on the ground. Researchers need regular accompaniment. They also need very practical training to get familiarised with research tools, build a common reflection base, correct failures and mistakes, and proceed further to build exploitable data bases. In fact, using new research-related technologies both in data gathering (images, digital sound) and data base building represent contemporary challenges. The use of qualitative data processing in particular should be developed. Researchers' communication capacities (articles, presentations) should constitute either specific activities or otherwise be integrated in existing ones.

Very few West African researchers are able to stabilise themselves long enough to develop a practice of researching children and youth and/or quite familiarise them-

selves with the important texts and build a badly missing more theoretical perspective. It is important to support and maintain, in the long run, the researchers working on this domain. CODESRIA can contribute to improving this situation by developing such activities as would help accompany researchers in their developments; but researchers will also have to be put in contact with other organisations and resources. Building a database on work available electronically is a priority.

CODESRIA's Capacities: I am not quite familiar with the work environment of CODESRIA, in terms of financial and human resource management. All the above-mentioned institutional avenues require additional human resources, first internally for coordination and organisation functions. Besides, a number of external resources will have to be hired on contract as and when the need arises. Yet, we know that donors tend to be reluctant when it comes to increasing spending on supervision, despite the fact that the latter represent an essential guarantee for research quality.

Last but not least, regarding inter-institutional relations, there are two aspects to them: relations with CODESRIA can be established by service and/or information-requesting institutions subject to the services available; CODESRIA itself may do the same towards other institutions. I believe CODESRIA, and particularly this programme, is seriously considering its advocacy mission; it should have a proactive attitude and propose cooperation ties/services to agencies (governmental, UN, NGOs, Foundations).

Methodologies

Rigour, duration, reaching out and methodology! I cannot develop these four items in this context. Yet, I would like to insist on a few substantive issues. I strongly believe that the fact of reproducing the stereotypes hampering childhood and youth research is of a sociological nature; it has to do with researcher estrangement from the majority of the population they are supposed to be studying; like many contemporary activists, they do not value knowledge and "inferiors'" practices (empathy should be the key word). The gaps are mostly socio-economic, cultural, gender and language-related. Against this backdrop, researchers have to be given resources that would allow them extended stay on the ground; financial resources and monitoring are im-

portant. It is undeniable that having child support institutions (agencies) alone feed childhood and youth research, through consultancy service, ideologically frames analyses and limits creativity.

The empiric childhood researcher must be able to acquire the capacity to prompt children and youth's expressions; this is a particular know-how which exists outside academic circles in the world of expression arts with which researchers and teachers have to establish cooperation ties.

Research work too often ignores basic rules because of lack of time, money.... The situation seems to be catastrophic as far as quantitative domain is concerned. Quantitative analysis capacities are often concentrated in a few private knowledge production and even polling and measuring institutes that still produce the best research work (or at least the best tools). Experts tend to come together within these institutes and sell their services to institutions; establishing cooperation ties with these institutions, placing scholars with them appear to be an exploitable option. These forms of cooperation are practised with some of these private enterprises. Teaching and CODESRIA also ought to show more rigour by demanding more scientifically-based elements in this area; this ranges from terminology error (everything is about "sampling") to methodological errors, biased questionnaires, lousy sampling, as shown by the presentation on Respondent-Driven Sampling; here again, innovation and experimentation are central.

Last but not least, methodological weaknesses are to be linked with theoretical weaknesses which in my view might be summarised as the lack of a dynamic approach to reality, the absence of a dialogic vision. In this sense, I believe that language studies are a much recommended domain in that they allow a dynamic vision to be developed with long tested concepts.

The purpose at this point is not to produce a manual but to favour instead the publication of a series of concrete experiences on children-adapted methods, allowing them to be associated with research. Research is to be understood here in the holistic sense, not only as data capturing methods but also as an activity integrated in the milieu that produces them. What do we want to learn? How are we going to share it and with whom? What

have we learnt and how do we conserve its trace so we can reflect on it? Creating and documenting research work methods with children and youth is a much recommended area of inter-institutional cooperation.

Policies

By definition, CODESRIA's calling is to work towards development promotion from an African perspective in the area of social science. As far as childhood and youth programme is concerned, the range of childhood-oriented policies is a very narrow one. Conventions, charters and protocols have mapped out a "universal" normative framework. Research has the capacity and obligation to question existing normative frameworks and to test them through public opinion as well as citizens' daily experiences and their concrete impacts. It must also be noted that most of the research in circulation has been produced by, or at the initiative of, intervention institutions. Censuring is common practice in post-production (manuscript editing, work falling into oblivion). It seems to me that childhood ideological construction is therefore a research area that ought to be favoured. Collective work is essential. More concretely, there should be more analyses done on childhood and youth construction from various points of view, age, capacity to provide support to dependants, reproduction, economy, cognitive aspect, etc. This is a broad-ranging and exciting issue. Ideological discussion and advocacy should also be considered, not only from a resistance perspective, but also in terms of developing the existing framework. In this sense, the issue about children and youth's citizenship in the light of their agency, and the constraints faced by both boys and girls, is a matter that ought to be developed. It is superficially contemplated under the term "participation in existing texts" and tends to ignore the endogenous forms of participation.

Dissemination

Naturally, CODESRIA should be proud of its publication and distribution capacity. It is important to clearly define the targets and objectives of CODESRIA. Whether CODESRIA should develop specific publications in the area is a question I cannot answer. Yet, I have two observations to make: maintaining a journal through periodic publication is constraining; is it not important to encourage African authors to publish in existing journals

in Africa and abroad? The publication of a series of volumes is a more flexible option.

Here again, one has to note the power of major international agencies to produce and disseminate on the Web contents on childhood and youth in Africa. It seems to me that African presence on the Web should be encouraged. As a research promoting agency, CODESRIA should encourage researchers to produce for different media: radio, podcast, footage, multimedia presentations. This is an urgently needed effort. Especially if you consider that in our area of interest, research topics tend to be very fond of expressing themselves and exchanging through these diverse media. Once again, one recommendable option is to establish cooperation ties with artists and communicators.

Dissemination is neither a phase nor an activity, it is a knowledge building process. It is important to develop interactions with knowledge targets (agencies, governmental institutions, youth, children's associations ...) soon after designing the questioning; here CODESRIA researchers should again be more proactive.

Ethics

It seems to me that CODESRIA should urgently offer ethical research protocol evaluation services in childhood and youth domain. One or more committees must be able to rely on guidelines that are yet to be determined. It is worth noting that several organisations involved with childhood and youth have produced, and are still working towards producing, ethical, guidelines for research with participation of children.

Research ethical problems vary according to theoretical approach. One would notice that once research focuses on a "problem" as a specific object (hence, in relation to standards – what standards?); finding oneself in an extraction perspective, like expressing a child's suffering, raises the question of how does one manage that suffering, the expression of which was prompted with the help of a researcher; this is particularly true in psychological studies; but all ethnographers have to confront these same interrogations.

Activity Identification Process

I insisted on dissemination as a process. I also underscored the importance of associating different categories of actors to research once the issues have been de-

termined. In this area, policy makers' voices carry more weight than African children and youth. CODESRIA's support should allow research to be developed outside its self-defined themes; or in other words, support must be granted to processes in which research issues are produced by interacting with the subjects and by establishing dialogue between the subjects and other persons and important actors for them, I mean parents and artists. The experimentation of this practice might be contemplated as a methodological exploration project, or CODESRIA might develop this process as part of a collaborative ethnographic project or as a collaborative empiric research team.

Example of Two Actors: Western Scholarship and the United Nations¹

I have asked two persons familiar with children and youth research to reflect with me on research challenges in Africa. This text has been documented by these discussions and suggestions. However, the points made by my female and male interlocutors are summarised below:

Innocenti Research Centre – UNICEF, Child Protection Specialist:

- Need for reliable statistics with child-centred indicators; indicators much needed to monitor children's situations.
- Find, in research, systematic and holistic approaches. Need for longitudinal studies.
- Participatory research research with children's participation.
- The childhood perception issue. This issue should be seen in a long-term perspective focused on social change. This effort should basically involve local research actors who should and could benefit from capacity building.
- Explore further children's resilience.

Scholarship, Anthropology and Education, Canada:

I present, in a very synthetic form, the suggested areas of research:

- efficient symbiosis between education and work for children;
- evolutionary forms of youth's social capital;
- citizenship expressions in a broad ecologic perspective;
- "Youth subculture", with a special focus on gender-based variations;

- links between youth's rights and women's rights.

Themes

A Few Preliminary Reflections

The three conferences organised by CODESRIA over the past three years, in order to evaluate the results produced by childhood and youth programme as well as contemporary debates and research in Africa, showed the fruitfulness and relevance of treating children and the youth like a contemporary agency, and not like passive actors simply produced by society. Youth and children clearly appear to be participating in society production and structuring (Shanahan 2007). In the wake of the work produced by a few great African researchers (including but not limited to Reynolds, Biaya, Diouf, Mbembe, etc), this is particularly clear from a cultural, political, sociological, economic, space and social imagination point of view. We are incited by these observations to go beyond constructing a child and youth as a victim but also as an actor even if constrained, in one word, a subject caught in power relations. Comparatively, however, children have been less studied than youth.

Despite the many demonstrations of youth agency (see for example Biaya 2000), conferences, articles and proposals by African researchers, time and again, present children and youth like objects forged by imported cultural products, passive receptors and reproducers of the values, languages and behaviours conveyed through these cultural products. I am speaking here as an anthropologist which I am. Yet, the theoretical challenge of contemporary anthropology is still, and always, establishing a linkage between daily experiences and broader historic processes. But a number of research productions too often seem to project general postcolonial inequality relations over the individual themselves. While this rhetorical process has a powerful political charge, it clearly jeopardises our efforts at knowledge production and support to the individuals concerned, that is, children and youth. We ought to observe power at play and its effects at all levels, and, especially, that of the subjects' experiences as they feed social science research.

Changing youth and children's relations to authorities in the broad sense – to authorities – is at the heart of individualisation process (Jenks 2005) which in turn is

at the core of the social process of aging. Exploring such changes, not only in their sociological duration, but also in terms of daily interactions and individuals' biographies constitute as many dimensions that ought to be explored as a way of re-visiting these individualisation and aging concepts. There are two other dimensions, in my view, that can orient this compulsory theorisation work towards self-production in contemporary Africa, a concept at the heart of childhood and youth. The first one is creation analysis, exploring and connecting new social spaces (physical, virtual, imagination); the second dimension relates to "self", in the prospect of increasing the number of identifications, hence of actors, spaces, relevant situations which are largely associated with the globalisation process. I believe that the suggestion to study language forms and the relationship between formulation and action is a possible and fruitful option.

Lessons must be drawn from these elements:

First, CODESRIA should clearly state the common features between these two categories of subjects, children and youth; this will make it possible to clearly identify the programme baselines.

There is also need to further explore the various constructions of childhood and youth at different levels, discursive and interactional. This should constitute a specific activity, an essential cornerstone, in programme foundation. More efforts should be put into contextualising, so to speak, and theorising childhood and youth in Africa.

Thirdly, it is necessary indeed to induce longitudinal and comparative studies. This objective can be a long-term support tool for African researchers. Comparison allows contact to be established between institutions and researchers, but it is also important to permit researchers to study several sites and populations and to favour comparison between different fields.

Fourthly, it is important to develop the activities favouring the study of child's education process, or child rearing process. This approach can be positively documented by the work done by the culture and personality school.

Empiric studies and African researchers' experiences can, as of now, allow for systematisation of development phases

based on social, cognitive, driving and economic factors. Research efforts, meaning methodological in this case, must be founded on these local categories.

Lastly, sending the distinction between childhood and youth into abyss, calls for the broader issue of what aging means in contemporary Africa, to be revisited and updated. Transitions need to be observed between categories, self-perceptions in their daily and ritual expressions.

From the methodological point of view, it appears clearly that there is a significant need for capitalisation of working methods, whether collaborative or not, with children and youth. These methods should be determined as a function of children's liking and interests. This observation is generalised (see for example Levine's recommendations 2007). The lack of methodological refinement is of course linked to the underdevelopment of studies on childhood and youth in Africa and globally.

The Themes

Based on the reflections developed together in Douala, I would like to present what we called "research themes". I will go over and complete the three major lines of action as formulated by Mwenda Ntarangwi.

Popular Expressions: Popular expressions by children and youth (languages, music, religion, dance, sports, game ...). This line of action should not be restricted to producing expressions alone, but should also consider matters relating to reception of cultural contents; the work done by the English cultural studies might be a source of inspiration.

Child Rearing: This encompasses child rearing and different capacity building techniques. Developing their social capacities is a central issue; children's accountabilities, decision-making and initiatives in their daily life situation. The role of peers in the rearing process must draw special attention. The construction of gender relations is a central theme of this line of action, masculinity and femininity and their porosity and alternatives must draw special attention, in terms of both language and practices.

Relations with the Public Sphere: In my understanding, this line of action should consider research on "self", the body and their training techniques; this is in addition to the continuation of work on relations between generations, institutions, social movements and political systems.

Aging: I believe that the aging process should constitute a specific research orientation. My conviction stems from the self-evident observation that childhood, youth and adulthood; that children, youth, adults and quite many other categories exist through inter-dialogue in specific social spaces. How are those social spaces produced? Who produces them? How do these transition changes evolve between aging categories? What are the social effects of these changes? How do children and youth themselves experience these transitions?

Gender-based distinction should be part of a constant comparative discipline. Methodological issues are transversal and should be determined for each project and show their relevance through the topics.

Notes

1. I would like to sincerely thank Richard Maclure and Lena Karlsson for their kind collaboration

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Redefining the Production and Reproduction of Culture in Zimbabwe's Urban Space: The Case of Urban Grooves

Introduction

Culture is conceptualized, presented and defined as a phenomenon whose existence derives from and is embedded in an historic past. In keeping with such a perspective Geertz (1973:89) defines culture as:

...an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about attitudes toward life.

Notably, most studies on culture present it as an unproblematic collective phenomenon, that is, as a form of property that belongs to the entirety of society as suggested in both classical and more recent definitions. For example, it is seen as 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits required by man as part of society' (Tylor 1956). Recent definitions concur with Tylor's classical definition and notion that culture belongs to all members of society and facilitates the social reproduction of society. Tischler (1993) posits that culture is 'basically a blue-print for living in a particular society'. The fact that all societies are stratified according to age, power, property and status (Tumin 1985) is often neglected in most studies on culture, and prominence is accorded to the harmony and social cohesion generated by culture.

In spite of such seemingly democratic perspectives of culture, the penchant emphasis of 'history', institutional memory, and the 'past' in the conceptualization and definition of culture inevitably privileges wisdom gained through age, and an intricate knowledge of the past. This inevitably consolidates adult worldviews while simultaneously undermining young people's participation in the production and reproduction of culture, and this also curtails any claim by young people of ownership of their societies' culture. Young people have thus, for a long time, been subjects of their society's culture (van Dijk 1998) rather than active and willing participants in the production

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and reproduction of their societies' culture. This situation has been more manifest in Africa due to the wide diffusion of patriarchy and the gerontocratic system of governance. Evidently, the production and reproduction of culture is not as inclusive as most definitions imply, rather it is value-laden and is about power and intense contestation (Christiansen Utas and Vigh 2006).

Culture is socially constructed on the basis of an alliance between gerontocracy and patriarchy and is buttressed by a complex web of ideologies that guarantee adult worldviews some degree of 'sacredness' while trivializing other statuses such as youthfulness and being female (Maticka-Tyndale et al 2007). This is apparent in the gendered deployment and use of language. This has led some commentators to argue that language is 'male' and denigrates other social categories. Sapir (1995) reveals the potency of language when he notes that it is a 'great force of socialization, probably the greatest' not only because it ensures social intercourse but also because it is fundamental in the structuring of social relations and social institutions in society. The role of cultural gate-keeping is appropriated by adults because their age accords them the power to define the essence of culture in its purest form or otherwise. Young people are expected by society to imbibe 'this culture' and facilitate its reproduction. This has reduced culture to a possession of adults that can be mobilized, utilized, manipulated and exploited in diverse ways.

Culture has at various times been used to induce submission among young people, thus van Dijk (1998) argues that culture is also a weapon that can be wielded by the elderly against the youth for different ends. Until recently, the production and reproduction of culture has been a gerontocratic enterprise firmly in the

hands of adults. In contemporary times, however young people, owing to their experiences during the colonial and post-colonial contexts as well as their exposure to globalization and technology, have engaged in struggles for visibility and simultaneously contested for participation in the production and reproduction of culture. The end result has been that young people have generated new identities as well as successfully penetrated the domain of the production and reproduction of culture. In Zimbabwe, these struggles for visibility have resulted in Urban Grooves, a music genre created by young people. Young people's appropriation of language and vocalization of social reality from their vantage point, as well as the attendant lifestyle and body language, have completely redefined the production and reproduction of culture in Zimbabwe.

Setting the Background

Contemporary research has revealed how "we are living in an era of significant change" (Long 1994). We are now living in a moment in history, a turning point, a time of transition and radical social change (Touraine 1984, 1989). Of great salience in this change is the locus of the rapid dissemination of scientific knowledge, technology, culture, communications and the fragmentation and reorganization of power dynamics leading to the emergence of new social, political and cultural identities (Long *ibid*). Technology is central in restructuring society, social relations and, more saliently, cultural and power domains.

The contemporary context is characterized by complex networks and webs transmitting visions, ideas, images and simulations across the globe. The entrenchment of globalization with the attendant intensification of technology has had a pervasive impact on young people (Holton 1998). Young people are exposed to diverse tastes and identities that are readily accessible and usually the click of a button away. Reality now exists to young people in different dimensions and derives from different contexts. According to Anthias (1999) information is ubiquitous which has a fundamental bearing

on young people's definition of themselves as well as their contexts.

Young people make sense of their contexts and derive meanings of social reality against a background where they have sampled other tastes, cultures and lifestyles and this global input plays a fundamental role in shaping the world of young people in Africa's urban areas. This is contrary to the scenario that was encountered by their adults for whom the local was the centerpiece of their existence. Institutions, social relations and social action have become more complex in the contemporary age where experiences of young people are informed by synergies and linkages between the local and the global as well as their own agency. Technology in both audio and visual forms has generated ideas, language, lifestyles and body language, among other modern facets that have had a fundamental impact on the conceptualization, reception as well as production of culture in Africa's urban areas. Siziba (forthcoming; CODESRIA) argues that:

The contemporary world is fraught with new meanings, experiences and expressions of being young which are developing/unfolding on a daily basis. Unique body language, language, slang, dress and other youth protocols reflect the pervasive influence of globalization. There is a proliferation of young people's movements across the globe, which utilize internet and satellite technology to be part of the various events and struggles that young people in different parts of the world find to be of concern to them.

It is against such a backdrop of the intensity of visible and identifiable youth struggles that can now easily be transmitted through e-activism, cyber activism, the internet and satellite communication, for example, that the re-definition of the production of culture will be explored in Zimbabwe's urban area. There has also been an 'explosion of hip-hop music in South Africa, Senegal and Nigeria, among other African countries, as well as the development of music genres linked to young people such as rai in Tanzania' (Siziba *ibid*). Contemporary urban Zimbabwean youth like their counterparts in other parts of the globe are techno-centered and imbibe various images and contexts from the internet on a daily basis.

In spite of the pervasiveness of globalization, data on the phenomenon reveals

that, while very imposing, it does not render local identity and initiative paralyzed. Thus, young people access and imbibe global tastes but this does not necessarily erase their local identity. Essentially, globalization is part of a broader mirror through which young people engage in reflections in making their choices. It is therefore not a mystery that young people in Zimbabwe view themselves as cultured young Zimbabweans, while they are at the same time proud of being articulate in a foreign cultural artifact. Globalization is thus a complex nexus of both the local and the global.

Jenkins (1996) and Barth (1967) aptly point to the elasticity and flexibility of identity. Identity can be clearly understood by appreciating diversity. In this manner, globalization has allowed the diversification of identity, culture and reality; and young people are currently at the center of this scenario. The redefinition of the production of culture by young people in Zimbabwe will be conceptualized against this visible 'compression of time and space and breaking down of geographic boundaries that have offered young people different possibilities of self as well as cultural definitions' (Siziba *ibid*). In spite of the pervasive influence of globalization, it is pertinent to note that the experiences of young people are far from uniform across the globe. It is apparent for example that because of differences in socio-political and economic contexts confronting young people in Africa, they constitute a different social category from their counterparts in the West. Further differences are also a reality among young people within African countries themselves.

Notably, young people in Zimbabwe exist on the margins of imperatives of government. They constitute a marginal group on the fringes of government's policy frameworks. They can be found in large numbers in statistics of the unemployed and under-employed. On the other hand, they can also be found in large numbers in exploited circumstances, such as being used in political violence and armed conflicts. Thus, young people are exploited for different ends, then dismissed by society as deviants destroying culture and the fabric of society. It is therefore of paramount importance that young people's activities and their contestations with adult-generated cultures, formerly presented as immutable, are afforded close attention. This study constitutes an attempt in this direction.

Literature Review

The bulk of studies on the production of culture in Africa, such as those by Mazrui (1995), Amin (1974) and Adjibolosu (1998) centre on the invasion of African cultures by external forces, particularly the 'Western'. Such work has gone further to set an agenda to not only differentiate between the local and the foreign, but to engage on reclaiming Africa's culture such as in Ngugi's 'decolonizing the mind' (Ngugi 1981). This mission is reflected in contemporary nationalist and pan-Africanist rhetoric as Africa grapples with creating the most desirable nation-state. Nationalism and pan-Africanism, with regards to the production of culture have subordinated other worldviews on the guise that reclaiming Africa and protecting 'the territory' is the most desirable process that should outweigh other priorities. While the production and reproduction of culture is set against such a noble and moralistic agenda, such perspectives push other fundamental concerns about culture to invisibility.

Notably, the production and reproduction of culture in Africa is a 'domain' that has been appropriated and dominated by the adult segment of society (van-Dijk *ibid*). The gerontocratic governance system in Africa privileges age, history and institutional memory at the expense of alternative perspectives. Thus, while culture is defined as a people's way of life', reflective of their worldviews and cosmos;- as a repository of ideas and knowledge based on African societies' interaction with their environment, there is a need to deconstruct notions that culture is neutral. Culture is not simply culture, rather it is about power, hegemony, ideology, contestations and struggles for supremacy. Vantage points from which social, political and economic capital are propagated have to be problematized. Discernibly culture, be it its production, its mobilization and usage does not derive from popular participation. Social institutions, social relations and social processes in Africa are based on a patriarchal gerontocratic system. African society is socialized to uphold these values and there are a number of social control mechanisms (see Durkheim 1981) that ensure the perpetuation of the status quo.

The position of women has drawn global attention and gender sensitivity in contemporary literature has become a cliché, both local and global. This has somewhat lent visibility to, as well as ameliorated,

the plight of women (Gaidzanwa 2002). Furthermore, advocacy by feminists has illustrated how social reality is experienced differently by different social categories (Geertz 1973). In spite of the resultant affirmative action, Amit-Talai and Wulf (1995) Siziba (ibid) note that 'Sociologists and anthropologists have concerned themselves mostly with women, to some degree with children and old people but very little with the youth.' Mead's *Coming of Age* (1928) is one of the classics that focus on young people. Where young people have been given attention, it is largely through instrumental as well as moralistic approaches. Often, young people are perceived as deviants constituting 'counter cultures and subcultures', tainting Africa's culture. Pertinent issues such as how young people experience, perceive and define their culture remain fleetingly understood. However, lately, scholars have attempted to interrogate how young people mobilize and exercise their agency. Among these are van Dijk (1998), Mate (2002) and Maxwell (1998) who:

Historicize changing youth identity in the post-colonial urban setting and look at the development of new lifestyles emerging from the new urbanizing and modernizing environment (Siziba ibid).

Globalization has created a window and a gazing effect that allows young people to observe, imbibe, learn as well as sample other tastes, cultures, values and ideas. In contemporary times this has led to Africa's crisis of 'a rebellious youth'. Young people are increasingly claiming spaces in which to exercise their agency and they have through music, language, art and lifestyle generated their own identities divorced from adult imperatives. The place of young people in the production of culture remains to be fully understood. This study explores how young people have, through the exercise of their agency, redefined the production and reproduction of culture. Focus is on Urban Grooves, a music genre developed by young people in Zimbabwe and how it has transformed and redefined the culture landscape.

Conceptual Framework

A great problematic confronts contemporary research on African youth, that is, there is the paucity of a solid, rigorous, relevant, identifiable and visible conceptual schema that addresses the social reality of African youth as it obtains.

Contemporary research on African youth still heavily relies and centers on classical theoretical perspectives. Inevitably, African youth are denied and deprived their uniqueness as a distinct social category of young people on one hand, and of Africans on the other. They are viewed and presented according to contextually tangential methodologies and theoretical frameworks. While African youth constitute a distinct social category from Western youth, their experiences are measured according to the prescriptions of Western science. Contemporary work on young people is thin on 'concepts that capture the African-ness of African youth yet acknowledging their global experiences in a rapidly urbanizing continent.

This conceptual oversight creates a dilemma whereby notions of African youth are a mere duplication of experiences of youth in other parts of the world, particularly those in the West.

Conceptually, structure and agency theories have been religiously worshiped with regards to understanding young people and their activities. Theorists such as Giddens (1981) and Merton (1957) set the individual against societal structures seen as informing the resultant behaviour and response from individuals. Simultaneously, young people are also perceived as active social actors who interpret their contexts and innovate around or within structural constraints. While structures are viewed as constraining, they are simultaneously viewed as –in essence– imbued with agency; thus they are both constraining and enabling. On the other hand, a continuum of possible responses to societal structures is posited by Merton (ibid) which includes rebellion. On the basis of such theorizing, young people are often viewed as 'reactive' and rebellious to structural constraints to their activities.

In spite of these contextual concerns and limitations these conceptual viewpoints have been of great utility in understanding social reality. They also point to the need for self introspection among African theorists in grappling with their concerns as Africans. Scholars of the postmodernist orientation such as Baudrillard (1989) and Lyotard call for the celebration of difference in the discernment of social reality. They seek to deconstruct the established world-views of social life (Scott 1995) that, among other things, maintain that they can be a single source of truth of understanding social

reality. These considerations are pertinent in seeking to understand individuals in their uniqueness and as they exist in their diverse environs.

Language is also defined and perceived as value-laden by Post-modernists. It is perceived as the tool that is mobilized to set parameters as well as value judgments of what is acceptable and unacceptable (Fuss 1991). The definition of what constitutes 'proper practice and systems' reflects the language of defense and protection (Siziba ibid). Society is presented as unified and the dominant language of adults is propagated as society's voice, thereby setting a boundary against alternative voices, as those of the youth which are seen as not embedded in culture, thus potentially tainting. Language can thus be used as an asset to extol the vantage points of adults while denigrating those of young people. Foucault (2003) also explores repression with a particular emphasis on language, sexuality, body language and expression. He argues that society is constantly engaged in surveillance of individual behaviour and sets sanctions to independent 'in-appropriate' behaviour. Society seeks to generate uniformity and acquiescence to standardized behaviour.

Structural Functionalist perspectives argue that the individual is situated within a structural web of roles which generate social cohesion. Emphasis is on the integrative function of roles (Scott 1995). Young people notably have been utilized on the basis of what they can contribute to society. This is particularly evident when one explores the role that they played during Africa's liberation struggles. However, certain roles are viewed as dysfunctional and in Africa this has largely been young people's activities that are in conflict with the dominant hegemonic adult worldviews.

Bourdieu has received limited audience in youth and cultural studies. This may be due to the density of his thesis. Bourdieu (1993) offers a powerful treatise of society through his theory of the field and the habitus in which he argues that society is a field of contestations.

Diverse forms of capital, that is, the social, economic, political, symbolic and cultural capital [or habituses] engage in combat for dominance. These forms of capital further structure parameters for the production and reproduction of material space (Siziba ibid).

Political, social, mental, abstract, political and geographic or physical spaces derive from these contestations. Various social categories occupy different spaces, and may aspire for alternative spaces, because there exist dominant spaces occupied by a hegemonic elite. The notion of domination is further explored by Althusser and Gramsci (1991) who focus on ideology and hegemony. They argue that the dominant social categories mobilize ideology as well as repressive state apparatuses to maintain the spaces they occupy. In spite of this, there is always the existence of contesting social categories with their own ideological orientation and seeking hegemonic influence.

All these conceptualizations of reality are fundamental in uncovering some pertinent aspects of young people's initiative and movement particularly within the realm of the production and reproduction of culture. However, the understanding of social reality cannot be based on a single background, in this case the Western context which pervasively permeates youth and culture studies. In recent times, the dynamism and intricacy that underlies initiatives and movements by African youth point to the need for more contextually sensitive conceptual frameworks and methodologies that are grounded in the activities of African youth and not on imported concepts. Thus this study, while borrowing from the traditional theoretical frameworks as discussed above, also opts for grounded theory, that is, theory that develops as the researcher grapples with the research problem as it exists. Zimbabwean young people will be viewed as such in this study, with a focus on how they have, through their music and corresponding lifestyles, redefined the production and reproduction of culture in the country.

Statement of the Problem

Young people in Africa are increasingly exhibiting that they are a unique social category that cannot be simplistically defined according to adult hegemonic cultural standpoints. While proving to be global individuals, they simultaneously appear African in their own right and self definition, hence the complexity confronting African society (in particular adults) in understanding them. In spite of this realization, young African people remain fleetingly explored particularly with regards to how their activities are shaping modern and urban African society. This

has seen youth activities being simply dismissed as cultural decadence. There is a fundamental need for an indepth exploration of how young people's activities challenge the dominant hegemonic worldviews in Africa and offer alternative voices as well as ways of experiencing social reality. This study is a step in this direction and it explores how young people, through Urban Grooves music, have redefined and continue to redefine the production and reproduction of culture in Zimbabwe.

Justification and Purpose of the Study

Young people in Africa constitute the majority, yet very little research has been done in the way of understanding their lived realities. Young people also constitute part of the marginalized social categories. Culture and its production to date has been informed by patriarchy and gerontocracy and this has disadvantaged young people. The emphasis on age and wisdom simply dismisses the aspirations of young people, their experiences and their possible contribution to Africa's progress and development. There is the need for a new and alternative discourse on culture that acknowledges the contribution of young people in the generation of Africa's reality, and that also further acknowledges that culture is much broader than a single, one-dimensional perspective of the adult world.

Africa's current search for solutions to its development problematic also calls for the generation of knowledge that is relevant to Africa's needs in the broadest sense. There is thus such a need for research that deconstructs simplistic views and assumptions about Africa and challenges confronting the continent. Empiricism and indepth scientific observation have to be the basis of telling stories about Africa. Culture has proved to be dynamic and always in a state of flux and this necessitates the development of equally dynamic and sophisticated methodologies and conceptual frameworks to interrogate culture. It is therefore necessary to address the paucity of knowledge on young people, particularly how they can be situated in contemporary culture discourses. Siziba (ibid) notes that:

Such a corpus of knowledge should capture youth identity from the vantage point of the youth themselves so that young people's voices are not

submerged beneath wider society's speculations and pre-occupation.

Current culture studies freeze culture into an immutable and unchanging force while simultaneously simplifying young people to sub-cultures and counter-cultures whose activities decay Africa's culture. It is notable that this conceptualization of young people is not a unique Zimbabwean phenomenon but it is an African reality (Siziba *ibid*). In a context of subjugation and domination, young people as active social agents have mobilized themselves and engaged in struggles for recognition. This is reflected in the proliferation of typically youthful movements that mobilize various forms of capital to assert, specifically, youth identities (van Dijk *ibid*).

It is anticipated that this study transcends traditional perspectives on culture and young people and generates innovative ideas relevant to Africa's contemporary context. This is in the light of the current search for alternative knowledge that derives from social reality as it obtains, rather than unquestioned assumptions and simplistic conceptualizations. Governments are also searching for relevant policy frameworks that can allow young people to play more meaningful roles in their societies. Such research can offer salient insights that can be utilized by both politicians and policy makers. Furthermore, this study should set a tone for further research on young people and culture in Africa. It should also lead to the building of a body of literature on themes largely marginalized in research that can lead to the development of Africa.

Study Objectives

The major objective of the study was to explore how young people through Urban Grooves are redefining the production and reproduction of culture in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, this study also explores and analyze the nature of the emergent culture. Specifically the objectives were;

1. To find out and analyze facets that define the production of culture;
2. To find out and analyze how young people's initiatives such as urban grooves are impacting on the production and reproduction of culture in Zimbabwe's urban space; and
3. To find out the nature of the resultant culture in Zimbabwe's urban space.

Methodology

Intimate studies, such as those on culture, ideology, young people, identity and other aspects to do with human behaviour evoke a pertinent need for methodologies that afford the researcher close proximity to the research problem. In order to capture the lived realities of Urban Grooves artists and get close to the domains of the production and reproduction of culture in Zimbabwe, this study is qualitative in nature. The flexibility of qualitative research allows the researcher room to perceive social reality as it obtains, without the complexity of rigid boundaries imposed by other less intimate methodologies.

The central theme of the study, that is, how young people in urban Zimbabwe are engaged in a process of 'redefining the production and reproduction of culture' is rooted within a particular and specific local, global, socio-economic, political and cultural milieu. The interrogation of the central theme should therefore begin with an indepth appreciation of such realities. These realities can only be fully understood by employing ethnography that explores social reality as a form of communication and a discourse of diverse dimensions. In this sense social reality through the 'researched' is allowed to tell its own story, grounded in the experiences of those living this social reality.

Culture has always been a complex area in social science research. Focusing on young people and their contribution to its production and reproduction further compounds the issue. Most researches on young people and culture have utilized superficial methodologies and conceptual frameworks that merely scratch the surface, largely because of the distance imposed by rigid frameworks on the researcher and those being researched. Qualitative research transcends these rigidities and rather offers the researched involvement in the study as active participants rather than as subjects. This was of particular salience in this study of the production and reproduction of culture and of young people who are at the centre of the redefinition of culture in Zimbabwe's urban space. Capturing the nuances of Urban Grooves artists' lifestyles (within broader national and global processes) and how they have impacted on the social, cultural, political and symbolic spaces could only be achieved by exploring the lived realities of the research subjects (Ulin et al 2002: 4).

Research Methods

Data was largely collected through the following methods. Firstly, an intensive literature and documentary review was employed in order to situate the study within existing and obtaining searches for knowledge on young people and the production and reproduction of culture. Unstructured interviews were then conducted with Urban Grooves artists in order to capture their lived realities, lifestyles and culture and draw on synergies with broader cultural concerns in Zimbabwe's urban areas. Focus of this research was Harare because, as Zimbabwe's capital city, it constitutes the epicenter and leader in the latest trends and activities of diverse proportions. Urban Grooves was actually birthed in Harare and the concentration of Urban Grooves artists is in Harare although it also quickly diffused and became a movement across all of Zimbabwe's urban areas. Furthermore, the researcher has previously conducted research in Harare on the identity of urban grooves artists and has generated very useful data as well as networks on the research problem.

Ethical Considerations

A fundamental component of all human research is the informed consent of the participants Ulin (2002:61). This is actually the starting point of research and Rubin and Rubin, (1995), note that ethical responsibility goes beyond the simple statement of informed consent. The researcher has to ensure that study participants come to no emotional, physical, professional or financial harm because of participation. Grappling with culture and how it is produced and reproduced, ideology and general struggles for hegemony rendered the study complex because these issues also border on an interrogation of the socio-economic and political aspects of Zimbabwe. Although no harm was anticipated, participants were made aware of the study imperatives. Pseudonyms have also been used to ensure anonymity and protect the identity of those who participated in the study.

Presentation of Findings

This data derives from interviews conducted with 5 Urban Grooves artists in Zimbabwe's capital city of Harare. The researcher has had previous association with these 5 respondents in a study on youth identity. Unfortunately, a further 2 respondents who participated in a previ-

ous study could not be located to collect their views in time for this paper. However data from the previous study on youth identity by the researcher entitled: *The Politics of Urban Space and the 'Paradox of Identity': The Case of Urban Grooves Artists in Zimbabwe* was also of some utility. The findings below reflect the central arguments proffered by the 5 urban grooves artists. Their other ideas are incorporated into the discussion of findings in order to allow for a coherent and thematic analysis of the research problem.

Profile of 7 Urban Grooves Artists

Chief

According to Chief, time is never the same or constant and life is always changing and this has been the case with urban grooves.

Patakatanga ku-reciver attention ne-airplay ndopatakaziva kuti tapinda tapinda (when westarted receiving attention and airplay that's when we knew that we were in) and it was inevitable that our music change the face of Zimbabwe. This is exactly what is happening in SA, hip-hop is in full swing. You can no longer take it for granted that when someone says music in SA they are talking of mbaqanga...actually they are likely to be talking of Pro-Verb, Pro-kid or the other young cats who got it going on at the moment.

Furthermore Chief notes that Urban Grooves brought with it a new lifestyle characterized by previously tabooed dress and body language. These changes to him reflect a response to the changes in culture by young people. Essentially young people are also engaged in producing a culture that (matches the obtaining context. He thus argues that the emergence of urban grooves brought in a 'new flavour' that has also been embraced by adults as well.

Nelly

Nelly argues that Urban Grooves is distinct from other music genres in Zimbabwe. This is in the same manner that urban youth are a distinct social category.

Slang reflects our time in the same way that Mbira reflects a certain time in the history of this country. That is why there is the old school and new school...For sure...it's life...this the natural movement of life. Urban Grooves is reality as we see

it). Thomas Mapfumo and them..vana Oliver (Mtukudzi) had, and still have, their own reality but that reality cannot necessarily be my reality.

For Nelly, culture is thus accompanied by changes and 'things' as well as people make way for one another in this chain of change.

What is, is what it is and Urban Grooves is what it is... you know. Kudhara vanaBlazo vaishana (In the past brothers used to shine) with they Afros and life had its own flow.. its own type of groove back then. But try to groove like that now and you kinda miss the point.

Berry

It's ok for some people to feel uncomfortable about Urban Grooves...that's when you know you've made an impact. Now, whenever anyone speaks of Zimbabwean music they mention Urban Grooves. It's now a very important part of Zimbabwe. You can see it in the way that people have responded to it. Unonzwa zimdhara richiimba (You hear an old man singing) Sugar Mama (song by popular Urban grooves artist known as Maskiri) coz it's the in-thing but there'll always be haters ... they went on about ... hey... music yacho ayisi (the music is not) traditional but really what's traditional about Sungura. Nothing ... it's all the same with music ... its about preference.

BC

For me, culture is what's got society going at any moment. The ideas that people share.The difference is that modern society is more honest, unlike previous societies. Kudharamudhara ayigona kuti vana vakadka mazai vanorwara. Kana kuti nyama yakan-gokodzerakudkiwa nevanu

vakuru. (In the past, a man could say that children get sick when they eat eggs or say that meat is only fit for adults) This was greed and hypocrisy because adults, particularly men, did not want to be questioned. Now, we know eggs and meat are for all..not zvemuto (not mere soup). It's the same with culture, man, lies are told for the benefit of adults. Now, you cannot just say this cannot be done by young people because they'll want to know why... culture should also be about truth ... tisavarane (let's not mislead one another). If young people are allowed to, they excel.

Yardsteppa

I dress the way I do coz this is me rasta. My music expresses who I am and what I believe...the same goes for my clothes. It's not just about the bling. You gotta know what you thinking before you make people believe in you. See... Urban Grooves has changed the way people in Zimbabwe think about music, dancing and life in general. Some of the tracks coming out are purely about youth fun but some of the tracks are deep and they get you thinking. Now, look, even Mtukudzi sang with X... that's heavy men. People have been forced to accept and now they understand. Different traditions are now mixing...

Discussion of Findings

Situating Urban Grooves within Zimbabwe's Cultural Discourses

In different social settings, music is in essence the vocalization of diverse social, cultural, economic and political issues. Social reality, as it occurs, is celebrated, appreciated, debated, discussed, discouraged and embraced through music. Social mores, morality and desirable

societies are 'constructed' through music (Askew 2002; Turino 2000). Music is thus a forum for dialogue and critical discourses on issues pertinent in social reproduction.

Hip-Hop in the Cape-Town flats in South Africa reveals how social categories on the socio-economic, cultural and political margins of society mobilize music as a way of vocalizing their marginalization. Such social categories simultaneously contest their marginalization by hegemonic cultural elites as well as re-interpret their existence and generate alternative cultures in which they exercise various degrees of power (Haupt 2001).

In a like manner, young Zimbabweans, through a music genre they developed, articulate their concerns, aspirations, tastes and preferences, and contest for visibility. Berry notes that challenging the status quo often results in the discomfiture of those in positions of authority. Young people have grappled with their reality and, in the process, they have challenged entrenched value systems in Zimbabwe. Yardsteppa's care-free attitude in describing how his dressing portrays 'him' as 'he is' alludes to young people who are no longer a creation of society but who are engaged in the process of creating themselves. Furthermore, his reference to thought processes informed by his own conscience indicate a break from adult ideological standpoints.

In the light of the density of the area of culture this study breaks attempts and thematic discussion of issues with the incorporation of data gathered from the participants in the research. In this way, it is anticipated that the most salient issues are given visibility and fully discussed.

Table 1

| Name | Sex | Age | Educational Background | Urban Grooves Classification | Body Markings and other Characteristics | Family Background |
|------------|-----|-----|------------------------|------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| Chief | M | 29 | Tertiary | First Wave/ Pioneer | Very Short Hair | Middle Income |
| Nelly | M | 30 | Secondary Education | First Wave/ Pioneer | Short Hair, | Low Income |
| Yardsteppa | M | 27 | Secondary Education | First Wave/ Pioneer | Long Locks, Left ear stud, tattoo of lion on left arm | Middle income |
| Berry | M | 26 | Secondary Education | 75% Local content era | A mixture of plaits and locks. | Low Income |
| B.C | M | 26 | Tertiary Education | | Long Unkempt hair. | Low Income |

Language

Language is a key and central cultural artifact that has proved to be a powerful tool in the hands of hegemonic elites. Young Urban Grooves artists have successfully contested the mobilization and deployment of language in Zimbabwe. They have appropriated this cultural artifact and used it to deconstruct a diverse range of cultural stereotypes as presented by patriarchal and gerontocratic Zimbabwean society. African language has been noted to be, not only gerontocratic, but male as well (Caplan 1995). This is easily notable in the gendered structure and style of language. For example it is a common cultural saying among the Ndebele that *indoda libetshu lomziki*, meaning that a man is a sexual predator. Another familiar proverb is that *inkunzi ibo-nakala ngamanxeba ayo*, meaning that scars borne from STDs and STIs are a testimony of real manhood. Among the Shona, the equivalent is *bhuru rinorwa rinowonekwa nemavanga aro*. This enshrines the sexual permissiveness of men in Africa. The culture of any society is created, defined and affirmed through language.

Ndebele and Shona languages are saturated by ideological intonations that are the basis of socializing young people into a culture of subjugation and servitude. For example, among the Ndebele, a central theme that guides the relationship between young people and their elders is the enduring proverb that *izwi lomzali aliweli phansi* (whatever adults say can only be ignored at one's peril because of their age and wisdom) while the equivalent among the Shona is *mukuru mukuru hanga hayigari pfunde* (an adult is an adult regardless of circumstance). The production and reproduction of culture as reflected in the mobilization and deployment of language in Zimbabwe is based on a deification of adult worldviews and the denigration of alternative perspectives. Further social control mechanisms are put in place to hedge against the interrogation of the verity of culture as defined by adults. Urban Grooves music questions the singularity of this 'adult' truth and the immutability of adult perspectives.

By contesting the monopoly that adults had over language, young people have deconstructed the notion that culture is a domain exclusively adult in orientation. Sexuality and sexual relations are redefined by artists such as Decibel, David Chifunyise and Plaxedes Wenyika. Deci-

bel chastises male sexual permissiveness and sugar daddies in his song 'Madhara'. The song importantly also warns young women and society of the predatory nature of relationships between young women and elderly (usually) married men. Chifunyise and Wenyika, on the other hand sing about the complications of multiple sexual relationships and how they disadvantage the remaining offspring upon the death of the parents (usually the father). The cultural prescriptions and definitions of sexuality, masculinity and femininity that privileged the adult male are deconstructed. Young Urban Grooves artists, by vocalizing social reality as they see it and contesting adult imperatives, have pushed the moral boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in the production and reproduction of culture.

Slang - Construction of an Alternative Language

A popular UB 40 song about apartheid in South Africa entitled 'Amandla' says that 'we'll sing our own song and we'll build our own society'. The song goes on to point out how singing 'our own song and building our own society' gives power to the people engaged in the struggle against apartheid. Ownership of language is fundamental in maintaining a people's power, hence the notion that:

The social character of language and its function – as the key transactional instrument for human groups – makes it both the supreme divider and at the same time an invisible instrument for uniting people. Language is the central feature of culture (Sapir *ibid*).

Barth (1969) notes how the creation and espousal of certain characteristics by a group of people is central in the social construction of culture. These characteristics become fundamental features that facilitate the identity of these people. Urban Grooves artists have gone further in their contestation of language by generating language that reflects their own worldview. Through the mobilization of slang, young people in Zimbabwe are in a constant process of writing and rewriting culture and history. This is evident in that Urban Grooves has carved a niche for itself in popular culture. As BC notes 'urban grooves language is now the dominant language in Harare':

Zvana shamula (go, going or leaving), *zvapakressa* (things are uncompromisingly tough), *kukiyakiya* (unortho-

dox means of achieving something or engaging in behaviour that is not based on protocol but is more of a gamble for success) *ndevedu zvese izo*. But now madhara are also chanting it. (We created words like *shamula*, *zvapakressa*, *kukiyakiya* and all that but now even adults are chanting it).

The wide diffusion of slang and how it has reconfigured Zimbabwean culture is notable in the Minister of Finance's (Tendai Biti) recent statement in reference to how government sourced funds to pay civil servants (The Herald July 23). Asked about the source of funds to pay civil servants Biti responded '*takakiyakiya*' (as defined above). The continuous compression of time and space means that culture is in a state of constant flux and new and relevant cultural devices are necessary to capture these changes. Nelly, an Urban Grooves artist, concurs with such a perspective when he argues that slang reflects his environment or context. He notes:

Basically, slang reflects our time in the same way that Mbira reflects a certain time in the history of this country. The difference is that our language, like our music, is about the here and now... Its not about the past.

The use of slang also indicates an attempt by young people to circumvent social control mechanisms that are embedded and rooted in gerontocratic language. The general espousal of this slang by Zimbabwean society may also indicate the repressiveness of language as constructed by hegemonic elites. Myths that are propagated by gerontocratic and patriarchal worldviews can be comfortably debated, interrogated and even derided through the use of slang. Sexuality is for example explored by Decibel through the use of slang. Some lines of the song go:

Vanokunwisa doro (they get you drunk)
Chinangwa chavo chirichekukuyisa nyoro (their aim is to have unprotected sex with you).

Using proper Shona would have made it impossible for Decibel to explore these themes on sexuality without sounding vulgar. Slang is thus an alternative language that is used to contest conservative culture. It is also language generated to capture the elusiveness of meaning in this globalizing world, fraught with struggles for power and visibility. There is the constant demystification of the view that there

can be rigid centers of power that produce culture without any alternative voices pushing for contestation and visibility.

Dress and Body Language

Pierre Bourdieu (1993) argues that dress and body language are fundamental resources that not only generate an identity in a dense cultural maze populated by struggles for hegemony, but they also point to ensuring hegemonic contests. At any given point, non-conformity or conformity to set dress codes indicate an intricate cultural duel. Body language and dress are forms of capital that can be mobilized to enforce as well as challenge the cultural hegemony of any social fraction in any given social context. Dress and body language are cultural artifacts that are value laden and saturated by certain ideological standpoints.

These cultural and ideological contestations can be noted in the body language and dress sense of Urban Grooves artists (and consequently in those who have adopted the lifestyle). Formerly tabooed and stigmatized modes of dressing now pervade Zimbabwe's urban area, courtesy of the deconstruction of ideology and the revelation that patriarchal gerontocratic power is both mortal and fallible. While globalization has heavily informed the culture industry in Zimbabwe particularly regarding body language and dress, urban grooves artists can be credited for being the fore-runners in subscribing to tastes and lifestyles that defied Zimbabwean society's convention. A popular sight has been of male Urban Grooves artists with plaited hair, pierced, tattooed and marked bodies as well as earrings/ear studs. Female artists have been no exception and now grow dreadlocks, bald their heads and wear dress as previously defined as male.

New body movements, hand signs, appellations, gaits and dances have also now firmly taken root in Zimbabwean society. Chief thus argues that the input of urban grooves in the 'urban scene' has been momentous. The urban context has been completely transformed and a totally new culture has taken root.

Urban Grooves *yakawuya neflavour yakapenga* (came with a crazy flavour) that is irresistible. Everyone's been caught in the groove. Its not been only about music... mafesi nemachicks (guys) don't walk these days.. they step. Nowadays that's how people

walk up in here and that's how we came up. What's worse, you check out a barley facing the other way stepping you can't tell if it's kalightie (a young man) or a big barley (an old man). That's how crazy this is.

Interestingly, as noted by Chief, this culture has not been limited to young people emulating their role models, rather it has also diffused to the adult generation. Even the elderly can tap into the vitality and youthful energy exuded by young people by immersing themselves in the vibrancy and tempo of youthful lifestyles. Dress and body language can be argued to be a reinterpretation, reconfiguration and redefinition of culture. Beyond being trendy and moving with the times, dress and body language indicate a socialization into a particular status in society. This can be noted in Military gear and prison garb. Van Dijk (1998) notes this symbolism and acculturation when he notes that in order to 'instill discipline and submission' among young people in youth wing, Kamuzu Banda introduced a uniform that had different meanings to different social categories in Malawi.

Dress and body language constitute a form of institutionalization that is used to condition individuals. According to RZA the leader of the Wu-tang Clan, a pioneering American Hip-Hop super-group, the expensive chains and necklaces worn by artists are very symbolic. They symbolize the inversion of a culture of bondage that once confronted black people. Expensive jewels worn by Hip-Hop artists symbolize how black people used to be in chains of bondage but now they have transformed this slavery to ambiance and affluence. In the lyrics of Methodman 'we used to be in chains now we rock chains' (Lyrics from the Songs Do You Really in Wu-Tang Clan's album-The W).

The production and reproduction of new cultural mores, with regards to dressing and body language, has broken the firm control of young people's expressiveness and particularly the control of women's sexuality (Caplan 1995). The supremacy of adult ideology has often been presented as natural but notably struggles by young people have allowed them to break down these myths and redefine culture (van Dijk 1998; Little and Price (1973). In any particular context dressing is presented as an ascription to cultural prescriptions. However, an indepth analysis of how various social categories are expected to dress by

their 'culture' be they leaders, women, men or young people, constitutes a dense text depicting power relations.

An Integrated Picture of Urban Grooves as a Cultural Discourse

The entrenchment of globalization, urbanity and modernity (Little and Price 1973; van Dijk, 1998; Maxwell 1998) and how these have impacted on culture, particularly with regards to young people, has been note. However, certain fundamental aspects remain fleetingly discussed with regards to young people's movements. Data on Urban Grooves reveal that young people's movements are not only about youth aspirations and identity, but they importantly also constitute a cultural discourse that indicates that culture is continuously being written and re-written. Urban Grooves in Zimbabwe reflects a new cultural dispensation and text on culture whose authors have created their own spheres of *cultural autonomy*. The cultural shackles that bound young people to servitude as in the case where they were conceptualized as 'D7' tractors in Malawi (van Dijk 1998 Siziba ibid) have been challenged.

A new forum for cultural intercourse has been created in which the power matrix and cultural landscape has been revamped. The distinct cultural artifacts of language, body language, dress sense and other symbolic facets have been re-defined. Cultural notions and conceptualizations of 'young' as a perpetual state of waiting to graduate into an adult world (Kuczynski 2002) have been dispelled. The production and reproduction of culture has been made more elastic and flexible, thus in the process, young people in Zimbabwe have democratized the culture industry.

Conclusion

A number of conclusions can be drawn from the experience of Urban Grooves in Urban Zimbabwe. First and most overarching is the fact that Urban Grooves has redefined not only Zimbabwe's urban space but also the production and reproduction of culture in Zimbabwe. This has resulted in the wide diffusion and visibility of alternative cultural artifacts such as language, lifestyle, dress and body language. There is also the audibility of voices depicting the culture and state of being urban in Zimbabwe. There has also been the deconstruction

and inversion of previously unproblematised 'cultural truths' such as the social construction of manhood through gerontocratic and patriarchal excerpts of sexual permissiveness and gender violence. The singularity of truth and its immutability have been challenged through music and there has been a redefinition of manhood, youth, femininity and indeed a redefinition and reconstruction of society.

As noted by cultural theorists such as Bourdieu, Althusser and Gramsci, culture is an ideological resource utilized by hegemonic class fractions to ensure domination. Urban grooves has thus uncovered the presumptive notion that culture is neutral and for the good of all members of society. Rather, the underlying politics of inclusion, exclusion and social control have been exposed. Spaces that embody culture such as the political, abstract, psychological, geographic, symbolic and physical spaces in Zimbabwe's urban area have been democratized.

From the data, it can also be argued that exposure to the 'global' does not result in any form of cultural incapacitation. Rather, globalization can be usefully conceptualized as one of many dimensions that inform the construction of culture in different contexts. Social intercourse between different societies is an ancient phenomenon yet culture remains a key differentiating factor among different people. What is apparent from this study is that there has been a deterritorialization and breaking down of cultural boundaries and formerly disenfranchised social categories are now at the centre of the culture industry.

It can therefore be noted that the transformation of Zimbabwe's urban context, and indeed that of the African landscape, is the culmination of cultural contestations by young people. Central to this has been Urban Grooves music that has allowed the vocalization, re-articulation and negotiation of social reality by young people as they experience, live and perceive it. In the same manner that the racist and separatist cultures of colonial African societies had to be redefined (incidentally through the wide participation of young people), the exclusivist patriarchal gerontocratic culture has been transformed. The production and reproduction of culture is no longer an exclusively male adult enterprise.

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Poetry Slam: A New Form of Youth's Expression Half-way Between Rap and Traditional Poetry

Introduction

Poetry Slam appeared in the city of Chicago during the 80s; it is a kind of urban music which is becoming very popular. In the United States, it has been used as a strategy for fighting school violence by organising training sessions on Slam text writing in schools according to Heather E. Bruce and Bryan Dexter Davis (2000). It is also a way of making language classes more attractive and bringing learners to write about what is happening around them. In Francophone countries, it is used to improve language students' skills, notably with a programme of the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* named *Slamophonie* with the participation of slammer Mike Sylla, a native of Senegal.

Poetry Slam is an exercise in writing skills where a special emphasis is laid on improvisation, search for the most relevant word; but is also a language game open to all those who think they have something to say and share with the world at large.

A well-known practice in Europe and America, Slam is gradually becoming popular in Africa, especially among Rappers. However, it leaves people wondering, *interalia*, about the nature of this form of expression and its being hinged on Hip Hop which some question, arguing that Slam is a different style in its own right, compared to Rap, the musical version of Rap movement. Still, many believe Slam to be another way of doing Hip Hop. And there are even people who believe that

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this music style is dependent on African traditional poetry or African poetries.

Through a comparative analysis, this article tries to determine the type of relationship between Slam and other traditional oral styles and also Rap. But first, let's look at the history of this movement.

Slam History

Looking back at Slam history, one realises that Slam has non-conventional origins. Indeed, it is considered a collective art, a free speech platform and a powerful social protest movement. It has fed both on the tradition of American poetry (from Walt Whitman to Allen Ginsberg) and Afro-American culture (dirty dozen toasting) and the Punk¹ Movement as well. According to www.planetSlam.com Web site, its precursors are said to be Jerome Salla and Elaine Equi. They were followed by Ted Berrigan and Ann Waldam who considered oratorical contests to be comparable to a boxing bout. Accordingly, they wore a boxer outfit and delivered some memorable oratorical contests. These new 'oral gladiators' conquered a new public by making poetry accessible and demonstrating that it is not at all an elitist style as many believed for a long time. This new movement was ironically called 'Uptown poetry Slam'.

But it was Marc Smith, a young construction worker, who lived in Chicago and was considered a non-conformist poet who gave it its final shape at the end of the 80s. He used to organise oratorical contests in bars across his town. In 1986, the first *Slamming sessions* took place with two poet boxers confronting each other in a bout where fists were replaced by words. 'The sessions were named after the verb to Slam' which means to bang or fling in reference to the verses chanted by poets. Often compared to Rap without music, Slam is in fact closer to the libertarian spirit of Jazz and Punk than the Hip Hop Movement; it retained, however, the initial anti-establishment spirit of the latter'.

In initial Slamming sessions, oratorical contests were compared to bouts, and performers like Jean Howard and Anna Brown wore studded outfits and bore weapons during their performance. Their poetic performance was to be used as a weapon. Auditors were called upon to act as referees to rate contestants on a scale of 1 to 10; this was done on a piece of cardboard which they display at the end of each performance. Each poem read is rated from 1 to 10 on a piece of cardboard. Then scores are added up at the end of the contest; the performer with the highest mark is designated as the winner. But at the time, people had no clear idea of Slam.

In modern sessions for instance, when they take place in a cabaret, the public can register with the Master of Ceremony or (MC) without any particular restriction other than their interest for the discipline. The candidate is asked to perform a

cappella, that is, without a music instrument, just like when you are doing Rap.

A candidate has a maximum of 3 minutes' speaking time in a place where there is no scenery, no particular costume nor accessories. Freedom of speech is the rule. And each time a poem is expressed, a drink is offered. These oratorical contests were soon associated with a jury randomly selected from the spectators in the room; the jury's assigned role is to rate the poets or teams of poets (collective poems). What is required of the performers is that they should author the texts being presented in public (Web site of Grand Corps Malade).²

In France, the first 'Poetry Slam' evenings were organised during the 1990s, but the vogue was yet to pick up. Writers, poets, Rappers, story tellers or dropouts, 'seduced by the unprecedented platforms offered them by these weekly evenings to express their claims and states of mind' appropriated it as Benjamin Roux remarked (Roux Benjamin, 2005). He went on to say:

A few rules have to be respected: speaking time must not exceed three minutes, and using an instrument, music or fancy dress is prohibited. The participants form a small and almost family circle in which two must-know actors of current French Slam scene: Nada and Pilote le Hot.

In this article, he noted that Slam scenes have increased to countless numbers in Paris and the provinces '*Slam is a sort of outlet for isolation,*' Nada explained. '*People who use to write in the secret of their isolation can now declaim and listen to poetry by going to a café instead of staying home, watching TV. This is an outdoor leisure*'. These new spaces of expression are more of a meeting place for people from various social backgrounds. On stage, a Rapper succeeds a traditional poet and precedes a political science student (Roux Benjamin 2005).

Thus, in France, you have famous Slammers like Abd Al Mailk and Grand Corps Malade (who won two trophies at the *Victoires de la Musique* in 2007), but you also have African Slammers living in France like Souleymane Diamanka.

In Africa, and particularly in Senegal, Slam is a Rappers' affair. For instance, you have Didier Awadi who takes advantage of his international tours to organise Slam text writing workshops. In the suburbs of Dakar, BMG 44 Rapper Matador regularly

organises training sessions on the different styles making up Hip Hop. He integrates in them a few sessions dedicated to Slam. Besides, he is the first artist to release a Slam album in Senegal.

With the support of Project Quality, Support to Teaching French in French and Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, Mike Sylla, a Senegalese national living in Paris where he runs a restaurant also serving as a scenery for Slammers to express themselves, initiated training sessions on Slam writing for students, as part of an educational and teaching process which climaxed with the organisation of 'Slam Opera' in March, 2008. This certainly elicited the interest of Senegalese people in this form of expression.

Definition

Actually born in the bars of Chicago, Slam can be seen as an urban form of poetry founded on proximity and performance associated or not with a musical language. 'This is one reason some people call it *capella Rap* ... In English, the word means 'to bang' and 'fling'. Here, we are not dealing with stones but with composed words instead.

Another translation of the word, but rarely used, is 'chelem' like in a sports contest since Slam contests are real 'physical feats'.³

According to Slammer Thierry Mouele, who organises Slam training sessions, it is a form of expression very close to poetry and relies much on the art of writing. To write a successful Slam, you can, and have to, mobilise all language resources. On the flyer introducing his workshops, he wrote:

Slam is a platform of free expression which encompasses a variety of styles, from classicism to the most urban prose. Our concern is to encourage a participant to define his/her own form of writing.

Tapping on modern texts, topical issues, light or more serious matters, the group gradually establishes its network without necessarily following literary requirements, like for instance Alexandrine verse with or without rhyme or even without verse.

Therefore, seen from this angle, the discipline does no longer seem to be a school exercise but simply an expression game which very often reconciles with vocabulary, stylistic devices, lan-

guage levels and grammar (Therry Mouele 2008).

The www.lattributdusujet.com Web site wrote that Slam is a multidimensional style which touches on art of oral expression but also on other artistic forms:

Poetry Slam is a mix, a convergence of different sources and practices. It is poetry regaining voice, gesture, joy and anger. It is transversal and feeds on drama, song, Hip Hop (comprehensive listing is difficult) and tends to become, thanks to all those who Slam with minimum regularity and perseverance, a specific⁴ artistic form.

It is a form of expression founded on the principles of traditional poetry. As such, 'it rehabilitates text and rhyme without dissociating them'. It requires working on written language to determine its meaning sequences which are also rhythmic units. Slam also refers to dramatic and scenic expression. It thus falls back on text to generate a song (it can therefore easily lend itself to dramatisation or 'role play'), as indicated on Mike Sylla's Web site dedicated to Slam:

It fulfils the wish of some modern poets for whom 'poetry becomes accomplished only when it turns into both song and dance' (Senghor). It is no surprise if Slam is therefore a form of mixed music: a synthesis and the ultimate form of musics and songs conveying - and shaped in the same movement by - the most modern emotions.

Slam is indeed the music language which is perhaps most widely spread among the youth not only in Francophone countries but also across the globe.⁵

This vision is shared by Corinne Tyszler who also demonstrated that both Slam and Rap allowed language renewal:

For each of them, rhyme and breathing is determined by puff. And still, puff is, for language, the trademark of he who speaks. It includes the tones but also as I said, speaking of Rap, a body language and materiality. It seems to me that it is not so much the lexical sense of words neither their semblance of an insult that matters but rather what runs through them, connects or disconnects. Puff also has pauses, blanks and syncopes imposing break-off lines between words which, by connecting them differently and unconventionally, shatters the semological unit. I believe that's also

what you call Rap or Slam, phrasing cantillation. Just like techno-music with its haunting, caesura-less and breathless rhyme fills the blanks, puff in Rap and Slam gives some depth to silence. (Corinne Tyszler, 2007)

In the light of the foregoing, Slam which has unconventional origins, as I indicated earlier on, is a form of expression with specifics enabling it to swing between poetry, Rap but also dramatic expression. But on top of all, it remains a performance art, focusing especially on improvisation and speech democratisation.

Relationship with other Forms of Expression

Relationship with Traditional Poetry

Many consider Slam as a resurrection of African oral literature. Speaking on latest developments in oral literature, Willy Bongo-Pasi Moke Sangol makes a distinction of two types relating to form and structure. He wrote:

According to its mode of transmission, free oral art (content is fed by tradition while the form is free) can be distinguished from fixed oral art (content is transmitted word for word). Depending on formal structure, you can distinguish between non-formal oral art which is characterised by the absence of poetic rules and formal oral art characterised by formal components pertaining to stylistics.

He inferred from this observation that there is renewed interest in these literary forms as new strategies are devised to reveal this literature. He went on to say:

Today, there is a sort of resurrection of oral tradition which deserves more than being simply relegated to folklore while it can instead make contributions to the French language and Francophony. This literature turns out to be very rich because it meets specific standards, notably the universal anthropological laws developed by Marcel Jousse (Willy Bongo-Pasi Moke Sango, p.)

Thus, through Slam, we are witnessing a sort of D return, in a more 'formal' and more elaborate version of traditional forms of expression whether reserved or not for a social class, a body corporate or other. Such is the case of 'taalif' (or poetry in Wolof language) and 'bakk' which are gymnastic songs exalting the courage and bravery of wrestlers in epic bouts. It offers wrestlers the opportunity to reveal

their skills and try to scare their opponents. This is a strategy comparable to the ego trip of Rappers used by Souleymane Diamanka in his album titled *L'hiver peul*:

My name is Souleymane Diamanka nicknamed Duajaabi Jeneba, son of Boubacar Diamanka, nicknamed Kanta Lombi; grandson of Maakaly Diamanka, nicknamed Mamadou Tenen(g); great grandson of Demba Diamanka, nicknamed Len(g)el Nyaama and cætera and cætera... ('L'hiver Peul')

'Taalif' often refers to traditional poetry, whether sacred or profane. While the most widely known work of this kind are those dealing with religious aspects or glorifying a figure who gained fame in a religious battle. These include for instance the work of Cheikh Moussa Ka who sang praises to Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba.

It is a Wolof poetry written in Arabic in a writing style known as 'Wolofal'. It is inspired by Arab poetry and takes on its characteristics, notably the search for the sharpest imagery, while also respecting the rhyme and tones that engineer the full musicality and flavour of this poetry. It is indeed through this aspect that it relates to Slam.

This oral art was revealed by Bassirou Dieng, who proved it to be a religious poetry with a non-negligible social dimension.

Slam is equally a style in which expression and expressiveness play dominant roles. This is what makes it an art deeply rooted in performance principles. It is meant to be spoken, even if the first draft is always in a written form. Traditional forms of expression, such as Slam, thus rely on pompous processes that Willy Bongo Pasi Moke Sangol described as follows:

In terms of pompositives, there are different sorts, based on their form and content: pompous form (fixed-style oral art), pompous form and content (complex styles) and pompous content only (non-fixed simple styles). According to its function, this literature deals with society and improvised narratives, official recitations, revelation, tradition and fixed refrains. It deals with quite diverse subjects: God, spirit, shades, magic, history, customs and practices (African Traditional Literature Between Popular Culture and Scholarly Culture Willy, Bongo-Pasi Moke Sangol).⁷

In the final analysis, the different forms of expression certainly have several aspects in common and, thanks to this relationship, the new style soon became popular in Senegal.

Relationship with Taasou

Slam is related to taasou, not only in performance terms, but also by content, expression places and timing. But it is also a matter of style. Indeed, Taasou is a form of expression in which improvisation is very important since you proceed from a common saying or a proverb or a spoken word to generate a text that can be changed as many times as there are performers. It is also a collective performance which does not necessarily require a copyright, for each Taasou is the property of the community. As Lisa Mc. Nee explained while studying the problem of copyright:

Taasu is improvised from a proverb or a few well known ('traditional') verses by a lead female singer in a choir who sings the refrain and by those who mark the rhythm either by beating the *Tama*, a small drum held in the armpit or calabashes or saucepans. *Taasu* belongs to the community but the artist herself creates a new form by adapting the poem to the specific circumstances of the performance. She uses it to make laudatory comments about some people in the audience or some attitudes, implying that the poem assumes a meaning only in context. In this sense, a *Taasukat* is she who composes a *Taasu* and should therefore benefit from a copyright. But she does not compose it alone; without a choir and drummed rhythm, there can be no *Taasu*. It is a collective work. This notwithstanding, the traditional base of the poem belongs to the community. Once again, we are witnessing here an obvious conflict between the Wolof and European copyright⁶ systems (Mc. Nee, Lisa, 1998).

Lisa Mc. Nee also raised the style problem. Indeed, traditionally, Taasou had to do with the performer's gender. She thus wrote: 'Take for example the less equivocal case of *Taasukat* who are generally women specialised in satirical and laudatory poem known as *Taasu*, one soon realises that there are additional problems to it' (Mc. Nee, 1998). Nonetheless, this form of expression is gradually opening up to men, notably singers like for instance Salam Diallo, Papa Ndiaye Thiopet or Papa Ndiaye Daly. But two important

elements have to be mentioned here: Taasu has managed to sneak into mbalakh music through Alla Seck, former backing singer of Youssou Ndour, Salam Diallo when he was a member of Lemzo Diamono or Secka when he sang together with El hadj Ndiaye. The performance is aimed more at heating up the song than playing a dominant role in the band. This is why such artists performed as backing singers or dancers. They, however, became gradually more assertive, opting for a process that will later turn them into leaders of their own bands.

Only that they want to keep the Taasukat status which is exclusively reserved for women, since Taasu is generally a female form of expression. Men who declaim in a similar manner are given other names like Bandkat, Kebetukat or Taaxurankat. This is a view also shared by Lisa Mc. Nee who explained that:

So far, this style can be performed by any woman since it is a female form of expression. However, society hierarchy plays a decisive role in performance, because women who perform laudatory Taasu immediately put themselves in a lower social class than he who is lauded[14]. This is one reason why, today, female griots specialised in Taasu tend to dominate this area. The media also favour this development trend because radio and TV stations often broadcast the art of great Taasukat, making it well known to all. Men also engaged in the practice of this style. Such is the case of Clowns (Mbàndkatt) who have always practised Taasu to make audiences laugh; now other male artists have started to practise the same, especially in the wake of Rap whose origins can be found in the Diaspora.

She went on to say that the Hip Hop Movement has the merit of restoring the prestige of Taasu long considered a superficial art. She wrote:

Rap has changed the status of *Taasu* because it has favoured its integration in the songs of star singers like Youssou N'Dour or Baaba Maal and training of young Rapper' bands. Some bands have even started to perform *Taasu* in night clubs (In 1993, the Lemzo Diamono band gave a performance in Dakar). This is evidence that rights to traditional arts exploitation are in a perpetual process of renegotiation (Mc. Nee, 1998).

Finally, even Slam and Taasu appear to be related in their phrasing; they only diverge in terms of the status and gender of the performer, performance sites and assigned functions.

Similarities with Rap

It is clear today that Slam and Rap have the same origin. They were born in the same places (America), their development followed similar pattern, by travelling across continents and involved almost similar performers. Indeed, most slammers were initially rappers. They shifted to Slam because they were not fully satisfied with Rap. In an interview, David Querrien and Kevin Vrolant⁷ tried to determine the common features between these two styles:

Rap and Slam are today described as the protest symbols of state cities and suburbs. This soon made me think of symbolism because in our circles of analysts, we often pretend that the young residents of the suburbs and city states are caught between a virtual father and a real father or confronted with the absence of a symbolic father.

Historically, 'Slam' means 'To bang' in English. It appeared in Chicago in 1980 and arrived in France in 1996. Slam is half-way between poetry and drama (Anne Querrien).

Since Rap and Slam performers came from similar backgrounds, there is some similarity in the themes developed which have a direct link to society.

The similarity between Rap and Slam is about the type of message artists want to get across. Indeed, Rap and Slam are often committed messages against society, racism and politics.

Rap and Slam have a common origin. Indeed, both forms of musical expression emanated from the United States. (<http://www.latributduverbe.com/Slam.html>)

Thus, there was a sort of shift from Rap to Slam, considered more poetic and formal. This is one reason Mike Sylla considers slammers to be the intellectuals of Rap. However, despite these apparent similarities, there are also great differences. Those differences are first of a musical nature and relate in the first place to rhythm. In fact, Rap rhythm roughly relies on 4-stroke, as explained hereinafter: 'the rhymes of Rap music (it is not always the case of the lyrics) are almost always made

of rhythms 4/4 or 2/2. In its rhythmic base, 'Rap swings' (see Wikipédia)'. (<http://www.latributduverbe.com/Slam.html>)

As for Slam, it does not always follow this music logic. It banks on improvisation and is first and foremost an oral performance; its intrinsic link with the music rhythm accompanying it only comes next.

Slam improvises because it is a *capella* and contains no rhythm while Rap must be maintained in a 4-stroke system. *Slam* sessions bring together people who have been performing the art for years.

(<http://translate.eipcp.net/transversal/0307/querrienvrolant/fr/print>)

There is also a violent dimension to Rap, whether physical or verbal, which you don't find in Slam considered softer. Anyway, such is the message Mike Sylla is trying to convey on his Slam-dedicated Web site.

Compared to more aggressive forms of expression, it is a music founded on the will to create a common poetic work ('Renga' is a writing workshop which also takes up again the so-called 'exquisite corpses' formula so dear to Surrealists. In substance, the purpose is to share lyrics and obtain from them, together, some original and new tones.

He also feels that this form of expression has educational properties, justifying the fact that the *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie* chose it as a French language teaching method in Franco-phone countries. But Rap was chosen for the same reasons, like in the Senegal instance where it is taught to French classes. Mike Sylla still stood in defence of Slam saying:

It (Slam) has an 'educational content'; it compels you to look closely at the language mechanisms, participating in text composition; it incites (and invites) you to produce rhythm and text sequences by yourself, with one calling for the other. The proliferation of poetic writing workshops in the Francophony sphere is the evidence of this educational content. For example, some were organised this year in Senegal within the framework of 'Printemps des Poètes' (Poets' Spring) in which you also actively participated as a design artist (13th -16th March (<http://www.baifalldream.com/>))

Finally, concluding that Rap and Slam have everything in common is not an overstatement; the more non-violent trend you

find in Rap Movement the closer Rap gets to Slam. In the end, far from being clones, both music styles are closely related.

Slam Specifics

An Urban Literature

Slam no matter where you place it is first and foremost a mode of expression for urban youth, like in Chicago, Paris, New York or Dakar. It is also a generation bridging music, open both to young and senior citizens. Anybody who feels he/she is a poet and has anything to say or share with others has access to slamming sessions. They usually take place in an urban space and performers address exclusively city-related problems. Virginie Mege further explained that:

According to the French Federation of Poetry Slam (FFDSP), Slam is both a 'democratisation tool and an art of poetic performance'. It is a 'link between writing and performance and encourages poets to focus on what they are saying and how they say it's (Mege Virginie 2007).

In one word, everybody is a slammer and can try to perform it. You just need to be willing to participate. Slam thus distances itself from Rap which puts the emphasis on ghetto lyrics, contrary to Slam where lyrics are liberated and can be appropriated by anyone, regardless of age, sex or race, the important thing being to share the performance site.

De-territorialisation of Hip Hop

Generally speaking, Slam has allowed Hip Hop which has long claimed to be essentially street-related, to leave that space or, more precisely, to deploy in other spaces. It has thus moved from street to more tolerant sites like cabarets and teashops, etc. and gained more respect in the process while some claimed to be the theoreticians of this music style. People like Grand Corps Malade and Abd El Malik received several awards at the *Victoires de la Musique*, an institution which rewards best music artists in France. According to Négrier (2009), the recognition process was sped up by this de-territorialisation, inciting public authorities to ally with slammers in an effort to prevent any violent drift, especially in French suburbs.

Slam's success is also linked to both the play dimension and free character of the phenomenon. In one article, Querrien explained these concepts and consider them

to be key to the success of this form of expression.

Today, *Slam* is publicly performed in some cafés with rating systems like in sports championships. *Slam* is charge-free, all you need is to be offered a drink in a bar to declaim what you have just written or improvised. *Slam* is a form of philosophy.

Thanks to Slam, Hip Hop gained more respect and got access to places it usually would not have access to or would not choose to perform, its favourite deployment site being the streets.

Democratisation of Urban Speech

Urban speech is no longer the property of a group of particularly gifted people or people who define themselves as oral speech experts for, anyone can afford to take the floor and say what he/she has to say. Slam is premised on the fact that everybody has something to say.

For slammers like David Querrien and Kevin Vrolant who were interviewed by Anne Querrien:

Within 10 years, Slam went from underground where only a few insiders performed in places known to them alone to an almost general democratisation. From 'Spoken word' as it was called initially, it has now become an urban poetry.

Going through the comments made throughout Olive2's article, one can read the following:

The first contribution is democratisation of poetry, often perceived as dusty and even filled with traps. Poems used to sleep like a log in books, Slam woke them up. A variant of Slam is to say loudly, to declaim in public spots (in streets for example), the poems that you particularly like and which may not necessarily be of your composition for, not anyone can be a poet! This is the first form of democratisation of poetry by Slam. The second contribution allows creativity to fully deploy because contest, as an incentive, compels you to excel yourself and more importantly to declaim them. Writing and declaiming a poem are two different things. You can write a poem for yourself but when you express it, you declaim it for others. Slam is sharing, donating; Slam is love (Olive2 2005).

In summary, Slam appears to be the form of expression allowing anyone to say what he/she means to say without any restriction or prior preparations, and by being only driven by prevailing circumstances. Improvisation thus constitutes the major component of this artistic creation. This is the position defended by Cathérine Mazauric when she stated that:

Contrary to other practices like *Slam*, Rap is, aside from any oratorical contests whose forms are by the way codified, has little to do with oral improvisation. However, Rap text does not really exist if not orally expressed through a body and in a particular scansion. (Les Rappeurs de l'Afrique: de la négociation identitaire aux pistes didactiques? (Mazauric, 2007: 178).

Restrictions are thus lifted and speech becomes accessible to all.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Slam appears to be an essentially oral style based on improvisation, speech democratisation and urban expression. From this perspective, it constitutes an heritage both from Rap and African traditional poetry. Beyond the formal aspects, there is the use made of it notably with possible social and educational exploitation. It also has the merit of allowing Hip Hop in general, and Rap in particular, to have access to places that had so far been closed to it. This kinship has certainly facilitated Slam appropriation by all segments of the population who have some interest in this form of art.

Notes

1. <http://www.planeteSlam.com/histoire/histoire.htm>
2. <http://www.grandcorpsmalade.com/Slam.htm>
3. 'An urban poem. The Reflection of our Slam Society: People Side' in <http://www.aufeminin.com/mag/societe/d1637/c42733.html>
4. <http://www.latribduverbe.com/Slam.html>
5. <http://www.baifalldream.com/>
6. Lisa Mc Nee, Le cadastre de la tradition : Propriété intellectuelle et oralité en Afrique occidentale, Mots Pluriels, Octobre 1998, <http://www.arts.uwa.edu.au/MotsPluriels/MP898lmm.html>
7. David (30 years) and Kevin (21 years) are both Parisians and have been part of the Rap Movement since they were 12 like

Youth Transitions to Adulthood: Changes, Trends and Implications for Preparing the next Generation of Africa*

Introduction and Background

The young are any country's greatest resource and hope for the future. But the situation is different in Africa with adverse circumstances confronting African children and youth who express awareness of their responsibility and unfortunate fate, growing up as Africans (Nsamenang 2002). Most of these young people's vision for adulthood is ill-fated by difficult economic social political cultural health and psychological conditions which have left most of Africa's children and youth hopeless and grudging in pain. Health care services economic resources and social services are unevenly distributed across the continent so that majority of adolescents are left lavishing in abject poverty unemployment under-scholarisation and a difficult labour market economy. For this reason, partially the issue of emerging adulthood has become primordial in most developing economies. Recently, in 21st century psychological research the issue of transition and the future of adulthood have become central issues in research on adolescence (e.g. Arnett 2000 2004; Shanahan 2000; Shanahan Porfeli & Motimer 2005; Cote 2000). However this new, brand of research is relatively not only new but also very scarce in developing economies like Africa. Besides adolescent psychology has also been branded as a "Eurocentric enterprise" where research "efforts have failed to capture what adolescence truly is in its global context" (Nsamenang 2002: 61). Rather scholars have tended to create or recast African and other non-western images of adolescence in the shadow of Euro-American adolescence so that no direct images of African adolescents are recorded.

With the absence of such quality research many questions about the developmental paths of African children and youth especially their pathways to adulthood have remained unanswered, or worse still unasked (Nsamenang 2007). Cameroonian youth for example especially those in high school, sometimes have demon-

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strated irresponsibility in their youth and the path to their adulthood so that we begin to wonder whether or not they ever reflect about the future of their adulthood. It is visible how a lot of African youth especially those from Cameroon today seem to proceed with life as if tomorrow or the future of their adulthood will never come (Nsamenang 2002). Many of them are ambivalent about taking on adult roles and responsibilities (Arnett 2004). Although they take a certain satisfaction in moving toward self-sufficiency they also find it burdensome and onerous to pay their own bills and do all the other things their parents had always done for them (Arnett 2007). Sometimes, they view adulthood as dull and stagnant the end of spontaneity and the end of a sense that anything is possible.

Moreover the economics of adulthood including characteristic changes and challenges of becoming financially independent autonomous personally and socially responsible emotionally stable and self-reliant also form a significant part of the problems of youth transitions. The economic social political and experiential situation around young people today enkindles feelings of a bleak future. Even the value of education especially in Cameroon as a pathway to adulthood has taken a downward trend since the 1990s with a lot of educational wastage (Mbua 2003). Many more young people though with high academic certificates are roaming the major streets of Cameroon without jobs. In this wise education or schooling to many young people and even some parents, is no longer a valid gateway to successful adulthood. It is no longer a concrete collateral for autonomy financial independence responsibility and other exigencies of adulthood. Young people and their parents report

views of a future that is completely bleak (N' Sambuka & Allen 2002).

However, the arduous task of becoming adult remains impending and challenging, especially for African young people. Social and economic inequalities in the African continent continue to mark the challenges of the Africa's child and youth life courses. While wealthier urban children and youth are beginning to experience problems with over-nutrition some rural youth still face nutritional deprivation (Nsamenang 2007). Unemployment and crime rates are dramatically higher among rural youth and young adults. Wealthier youth and those in urban areas are more likely to be in school than their poor rural counterparts and thus enjoy significant advantages in a labour market that increasingly rewards credentials and not basic skills. The mark of rural poverty is clear in the elevated livelihood of rural youth participating in the labour force in the high percentage of working youth employed in agriculture and in the large-scale youth and young adult migration into urban settings. In the midst of all these Africa's children and youth also suffer the effect of disease especially HIV/AIDS and malaria increasing rates of unemployment alcoholism and drug trafficking corruption and embezzlement which continuously predict a bleak future for the future of African youth. This, somehow, is at the centre of explanations for why Africa's youth perceive adulthood the way they do and why they eventually become what they become in their adulthood.

Demographic Trends Affecting Next Generations in Africa

The world population is currently estimated at 6,571,414,237 (UNFPA 2007). It is projected that by 2050 this population would reach nine billion making a 38 per cent jump from the 2007 figure and more than the 1.6 billion people believed to have existed in 1900. The continental spread of this population is such that of every 100 people 61 live in Asia 14 in Africa 11 in Europe nine in Latin America five in North

America and less than one in Oceania. Out of every 100 babies, 57 are born in Asia 26 in Africa nine in Latin America five in Europe and less than one in Oceania. It is also important to report that sub-Saharan Africa remains the region with the highest fertility (Smith 2004). Incidentally we find that only 17 per cent of the world's population lives in industrialised countries while rapid growth is forecast in the least developed nations. For example the population in Burkina Faso Burundi Chad Congo the Democratic Republic of Congo Guinea-Bissau Liberia Mali Niger and Uganda is projected to triple between 2005 and 2050 (UNFPA 2007). Such projections tie with demographers foreseeing declining aged populations in many industrialised nations; and growing younger populations in the developing world (African Development Forum 2006; Lloyd 2005). This means that fertility rates will likely remain low in regions where babies are most-wanted and highest in regions where poverty and hunger are prevalent – the situation of Africa. This increase is owed to the high fertility rate that underlies Africa's youth demographics.

The foregone projections if true then future global population growth will be heavily concentrated in Latin America Africa, and South Asia. Concretely by 2050 Africa's population is expected to spring from its present estimated 900 million to almost two billion while South Asia's is projected to swell from 1.6 billion to nearly 2.5 billion. Every 18 per cent of women 15-19 years of age gave birth in central Africa 6 per cent in Southeast Asia one per cent in Western Europe (Population Reference Bureau 2000). The age structure of the world's population indicates 1.8 billion people under age 15 years (27.4%) 4.8 billion people age 15-64 years (65.2%) and 483 million people are 65 years plus (7.4%). Furthermore two billion people under the age of 20 are in the less developed regions of the world. In the case of sub-Saharan Africa 45 per cent of the population was under 15 years in 1998 making the African continent the youngest world continent. Africa's child and youth cohorts make up over 60 per cent of the total population (Nsamenang 2002).

These analyses indicate that a significant proportion of sub-Saharan African population is children and youth. But they still represent the most affected population cohorts in the continent. Infant

mortality declined in Africa to 105 per 1000 live births in 1997 but is still the highest in the world. Of the children who survive through age six nearly one-third of them are chronically malnourished (Nsamenang 2007). This precarious situation is currently worsened by the devastating AIDS pandemic which left 11 million orphans in 2001 closed to 80 per cent of the world total (UNICEF 2003). This situation is exemplified in a Uganda survey showing that every fourth household hosts a child to parents who have died of AIDS (Baguma 2006). This is expected to grow to 20 million by 2010 if urgent attention is not rendered.

Another serious problem plaguing the growth of children and youth in Africa is the war and civil conflict within states causing internal and out-of-country displacements. In 1999 at least 85 per cent of the total displaced persons in the continent were children and women (The World Facebook 2006). Today 20 per cent of sub-Saharan Africa's total population of children below six years is seriously at risk (Nsamenang 2007). These precarious concerns have led to declining life expectancy so that people expect to live just 36 years in Zimbabwe 38 in Zambia and 40 in Malawi (The World Facebook 2006). This means that children and youth have become the greatest investment of societies if they expect to develop and meet the standards of world global economies. Countries, especially those south of the Sahara, need to begin to seek and advocate new frontiers with novel insights on how to assist young people through their transitions inadvertently building and preparing next generation Africa.

In terms of current youth participation in the world of work youth account for 45 per cent of the total labour force in Africa hence the need for Africa's development effort to reflect this demographic fact. However more than 50 per cent of that youth is illiterate, and instead of being in school or training centres more than 300,000 of them serve rebel movements as bush soldiers. As a result of this demography many young people have little or no skills and are excluded from productive economic and social life existing without hope and support (Nsamenang 2002). Those that have some education exhibit skills irrelevant to current demand in the labour market and at a time when educational and skill requirements are in-

creasing resulting in millions of unemployed and underemployed youth (African Development Forum 2006). This calls for urgent need to improve the quality of education and training for the youth in the African continent.

Basic Characteristics of Young Adulthood: Implications for Generational Scheduling

But what marks the on-set of adulthood in children and youth? There are many perspectives that explain the on-set of adulthood (young adulthood) its basic characteristics and responsibilities. Developmental psychologists usually focus on physical cognitive and emotional characteristics. From that perspective most young adults have completed the process of physical maturation usually attaining full adult height and full development of secondary sex characteristics. Cognitive changes during these years may constitute a framework for subjective adulthood perception among transitioning adolescents. According to developmental psychologists most young adults aged 18 and over will move into adult roles and responsibilities and may learn a trade work and/or pursue higher education; fully understand abstract concepts and be aware of consequences and personal limitations; identify career goals and prepare to achieve them; secure their autonomy and build and test their decision making skills; and develop new skills hobbies and adult interests (Huberman 2002). Emotionally most transitioning young people will begin to move into adult relationships with their parents; see the peer group as less important as a determinant of behavior; feel empathic; have greater intimacy skills; complete their values framework; carry some feelings of invincibility; and establish their body image. Sexually young adults may begin to enter into intimate sexual and emotional relationships; understand their own sexual orientation although they may still experiment; understand sexuality as connected to commitment and planning for the future; shift their emphasis from self to others; and experience more intense sexuality (Huberman 2002).

There are also specific characteristics and traditional practices that mark the coming of adulthood in African societies. Here the socio-cultural dimension of adolescence is marked by a set of cultural norms and practices that govern the transition

from childhood to adulthood (Tchombe 2007). Examples of such norms are initiation rites marriage changed ways of dressing circumcision rites cultural initiation schools ritual expectations and ceremonies (Shumba & Seeco 2007; Tchombe 2007; Araria 2007). After performing these norms the individual is regarded differently now as an adult. For example among the Setswana of Botswana the transition from boyhood to manhood come with certain privileges and responsibilities (Shumba & Seeco 2007). These practices including adolescent hedonistic conceptions of life set them to think and regard the future of their adulthood in subjective terms. The major adult transition for Africans is that young people achieve in life by being auto-nomous self-reliant responsible for self and others self-sufficient self confident independent and above all interdependent collective and supportive to the well being of their kin and community. And so, they do not need to graduate from school pick up jobs get married and have children before they are capable of doing these. They are begun to be nurtured right from childhood through traditional practices like hunting fishing farming cooking and caregiving towards responsible adulthood. These explain the power of agency and subjectivity in Africa's children and youth cohorts.

But according to traditional demographers (e.g. Hogan & Astone 1986) the attainment of adulthood include a cluster of transitions, beginning with the completion of school entry into the labour force and exit from the parental household followed by marriage and parenthood. Brown Moore & Bzostek (2004) also describe key characteristics of young adults in relation to educational attainment and financial self-sufficiency health behaviours family formation, and civic involvement. Meanwhile other research think of the attainment of adulthood in terms of the acquisition of the skills and attitudes needed to perform adult roles (Richter & Pandey 2006). However by either of these standards and based on their subjective assessment many young people have not yet become fully adult because they are not ready or able to perform the full range of adult roles and they have not forged a stable identity of who they are and where they fit into in society (Furstenberg Kennedy McCloyd Rumbaut & Settersten 2003).

According to Arnett (2000) young people in their late teens and early twenties are not adults but emerging adults. Unlike adults they are undergoing a period of exploration where they can test out a variety of possible life courses in love work and worldviews since they have not yet entered the enduring responsibilities that are normative in adulthood (Benson & Furstenberg 2003). On this account young people today especially those in developing economies such as sub-Saharan Africa middle-class whites minority groups and those from working class families do not define the attainment of adulthood based on traditional societal events (Benson & Furstenberg 2003). Rather, they see adulthood subjectively depending on what they are capable of doing as individuals and with the means available. This may account for why basic characteristics of adulthood today are shifting away from traditional demographic events such as leaving school finding a full time job getting married and having a child to more subjective personal feelings of individual autonomy personal responsibility self control and financial autonomy which are arrived at through self-assessments person agency and voice; and not by societal demand.

A study conducted in South Africa (Richter & Panday 2006) finds that across Africa south of the Sahara there is a high degree of consensus that adulthood comes with ability to set up and maintain an independent family and household that is financially sustainable safe and provides a nurturing environment. This makes conceptions of adulthood across African youth more subjective than demographic. As such, African youth transitions are underpinned by the need to establish financial and residential independence from parents and the associated requirements of economic self-sufficiency through education or sound schooling. These transitions may also be embedded in, and dictated by, the peer culture where being with and hanging out with peers may shape or reshape youth strides towards adulthood from the perspective of group influence or peer culture.

Keeping with the indicators outlined by Arnett (1998, 2000) explaining the shift from event markers of adulthood to subjective markers emphasizing the psychological, personal and emotional establishment of youth independence and responsibility for their own family,

Richter and Panday (2006) also discuss reasons for the shift within the African context. Accordingly African young people spend more time in school, experiencing delayed entry into the labour market and increasing the gap between youthhood and adulthood. They also have to contend with inordinately high rates of unemployment, so that the completion of education does not always lead to a job. The result is that ensuing characteristics such as marriage, parenthood, and so on are also delayed. Contrarily, employment, and particularly full-time employment remains the key to self-sufficiency for most young adults (Brown Moore & Bzostek 2004) especially in Euro-American societies. This difficulty has made the transition to adulthood in Africa today more or less a psychological emotional and personal experience far from traditional social event markers.

Global Youth Transitions

The transition to adulthood is a period of social psychological economic and biological transitions and for many involves demanding emotional challenges and important choices (Lloyd 2005). The transition to adulthood was compressed and standardized during the first half of the twentieth century then stretched out and individualized during the later part of the century (Hayford & Furstenberg 2008). The implication of these changes in the transition to adulthood for other life course stages is unclear. Some scholars argue that the delay in the adoption of adult roles means that adolescence is being extended (Buchmann 1989). To other researchers the increasing length of the transitional period and the later entry into full adult status suggest the development of a new life stage labeled young or emerging adulthood (Arnett 2000; Hendry & Kloep 2007). Whichever way social definitions of what it means to be an adult for oneself or for others have evolved in response to changes in the transition to adulthood (Furstenberg Kennedy McCloyd Rumbaut & Settersten 2003).

For many decades scholars all over the world held that entry into adulthood was delineated by five transition markers: completing school leaving home beginning one's career marrying and becoming a parent (Shanahan 2000; Settersten 2006). By assuming these roles youth were thought to relinquish the hallmarks of adolescence including dependency on

parents immature behaviour that reflects experimentation with roles and indecision about one's identity; and in turn the newly acquired adult roles brought with them strong expectations for adult behaviour (Shanahan Porfeli & Motimer 2005).

However based on these five criteria the global percentage of youth in their twenties and thirties who would qualify as adult has decreased significantly in recent decades (Mortimer and Aronson 2001). For example education has extended into the late twenties and early thirties family formation has been postponed and many young people plan on remaining single and childless well into their thirties if not indefinitely (Casper & Bianchi 2002) cited in Shanahan Porfeli & Motimer (2005). They also argue that by the end of the 20th century most adults hold expectations about the timing of these markers but they do not view off-time transitions as deserving of disapprobation. These social changes have prompted new views of what constitutes adulthood. Among these views are "emerging adulthood" (Arnett 2004, 2000) which now constitutes a phase of the life course extending between adolescence and adulthood; similarly "youthhood" (Cote 2000) "adoles-cenhood" (Nsamenang 2005 2002) or "contestable adulthood" (Horowitz & Bromnick 2007) suggesting a new phase of life during which "psychological adulthood is hopefully attained through personal strivings" (Shanahan & Longest 2007:7).

Emerging adults unlike full adults are undergoing a period of exploration where they can test out a series of possible life courses in love work and worldviews because they have not yet entered the enduring responsibilities that are normative in adulthood (Arnett 2000; Barry & Nelson 2005; Furstenberg Kennedy, McCloyd Rumbaut & Settersten 2003). It is because young adults are in this period of exploration that their subjective sense of adulthood is based less on traditional socio-demographic markers but more on individualistic markers and attitudes (Settersten 2006; Arnett 1998, 2000; Shanahan Porfeli & Motimer 2005; Benson & Furstenberg 2003). For these reasons the transition to adulthood is characterised by heightened risk-taking behaviour and self-exploration of numerous domains (Arnett 2000 1998) which empty in the acquisition of the skills and attitudes needed to perform adult roles

(Furstenberg Kennedy McCloyd Rumbaut & Settersten 2003). It is largely a period when late adolescents and early adults begin to figure out what they want to do and how they might go about it. It presupposes that a developing adolescent acquires a set of characteristics that enables him or her to perform expected adult behaviours (Benson & Furstenberg 2003; Saetermoe Beneli & Busch 1999; Furstenberg Kennedy McCloyd Rumbaut & Settersten 2003).

In terms of age norms there has been disagreement on when exactly the transition process lasts. However various researches have outlined indicators with Arnett 2000 1998; Stoep, Beresford, Weiss, McKnight B. Cauce, & Cohen, (2000) citing 18 to 25 years. Meanwhile Furstenberg Kennedy McCloyd Rumbaut & Settersten (2003) argue that many adolescents do not complete the transition to adulthood these days until their late 20s or even early 30s. Yet to others (Benson & Furstenberg 2003) the timing of demographic transitions varies by socioeconomic position. The most prevalent issue is that it does indeed take much longer to make the transition to adulthood today than decades ago (Furstenberg Kennedy McCloyd Rumbaut & Settersten 2003) and the process has become more ambiguous and occurs in a less uniform and more gradual complex fashion (Settersten 2006). Behind this is the fact that it takes much longer to get a full-time job that pays enough to support a family than it did in the past.

Changes and Trends in Youth Transitions

Over the last 30 years virtually all event markers of adulthood have been shifted to older ages (Furstenberg 2000). For instance a higher proportion of students completed high school in the 1990s than in the 1960s and more students now enrol into university education pushing forth the age of leaving school. Also, the median age for marriage and first birth has risen steadily since 1970s (Casper & Bianchi 2002). In addition, the timing of these role changes has become more varied across individuals and within individual life courses (Buchmann 1989; Shanahan 2000). For example it has become more common to have a child before marrying and to re-enter school after spending sometime in the labour force (Hayford & Furstenberg 2008). The net

result of these changes is that most people are taking longer to go through the full set of transitions into adult roles and some are delaying marriage and parenthood indefinitely. The changes are also implicating youth definitions and perceptions of what adulthood is and how they would eventually get there. This explains why commentators such as Nsamenang (2007) Galambos and Leadbeater (2000) and Wyn (2005) have charged researchers to place the participants' voice at the centre of the research process to properly encapsulate the experience of life during these transitions.

Contemporary sociological theorising also explains the changes in the transition to adulthood indicating that the transition is not only prolonged and destandardised but also uncertain and reversible (Horowitz & Bromnick 2007). According to Stauber and Walther (2002) today's young people have to manage shifts between dependency and independence and back to dependency as a result of switching trajectories either through personal choice or force for example unemployment or relationship break down. From this perspective changing states of semi-dependency have replaced the dichotomy of dependency in youth and autonomy in adulthood (Biggart & Walther 2006) explaining why 18- to 25-year-olds tend to describe themselves as young and adult at the same time (du Bois-Reymond & Stauber 2005).

In trying to understand this extended and heterogeneous life transition the question "when does adolescence end?" has become a key issue for research in the 21st century. Arnett has undertaken a prolific series of studies addressing this issue. His findings somewhat point to a consistent pattern leading him to conclude that markers of the transition to adulthood are "intangible gradual psychological and individualistic" (Arnett 1997:15). Arnett (2000) sees the time between adolescence and adulthood as being separate from either period labelling it "emerging adulthood:" an empirically distinguishable phase when young people see themselves as being too old to be adolescents but not yet full-fledged adults. With this a new strand of research has escalated in the field of adolescent research. Research into emerging adulthood has highlighted that young adults reject traditional role transitions in their conceptions of adulthood and instead place importance on

responsibility decision making and autonomy (Arnett 1997 1998 2003; Greene Wheatley & Aldava 1992). In Arnett's (1997) fixed choice questionnaire the item "Accept responsibility for the consequences of your actions" was the most popular of his 40 items as being necessary for adulthood (Horowitz & Bromnick 2007). Cross-cultural replications of Arnett's theorisation revealed that this emphasis on responsibility and other markers of independence are not confined to white Americans (e.g. Facio & Micocci 2003). Similar findings have been reported using qualitative open-ended data collection techniques leading to a consensus among many that the transition to adulthood is marked by a coherent set of criteria (Horowitz & Bromnick 2007). My ongoing research also partly focuses on this set of coherent criteria but from adolescent perceptual perspectives of adulthood in African societies. It is aimed at determining whether African youth (in Cameroon) define the future of adulthood using the same set of coherent criteria or basically in ways typical of African worldviews and then further tests them against the transition agency of formal schooling otherwise "education".

African Youth and the Transition to Adulthood

Africa's youth are immersed in a triple inheritance (Mazrui 1986) of Arabic-Islamic cultural fragments and Western-Christian legacies that have been superimposed on a highly resilient but ruthlessly haggled indigenous Africanity (Nsamenang 2005). The African worldview conceives of the youth as growing out of childhood and poised for an adulthood that lies in the future (Araria 2007; Nsamenang 2002). And in African social ontogeny adolescence is regarded as a "way station" between the stages of social apprenticeship in childhood and the full social integration in adulthood beginning with social entrée a brief transitional period that may be approximated with puberty that marks the beginning of adult life (Nsamenang 2002; Serpell 1994). African young people are considered the bridge to Africa's future and the hope of the continent. Adolescence and young adulthood are typically marked by rituals rites of passage and initiations into diverse sacred societies. For example there is *goat sacrifice* and *corn flour sacrifice* for deceased maternal aunt or uncle and for deceased father among the Kom people of

Cameroon; *bogwera* (for boys) and *bojale* (for girls) among the Setswana of Botswana; and among the Nara ethnic group of Eritrea there is a ceremony to celebrate manhood and womanhood at age 14 (Shumba & Seeco 2007; Tchombe 2007; Araria 2007; Nsamenang 2002; Serpell 1994; Erny 1987; Jahoda 1982; Mckinney Fitzgerald & Strommen 1982). In most of these societies these traditional practices mark the adolescent's coming of age or transition to adulthood.

In the past young people around the world tended to move directly from childhood to adult roles but today the interval between childhood and the assumption of adult roles is lengthening (Lloyd 2005) moving towards and across youthhood and adolescence.. Compared to the situation 20 years ago Lloyd (2005) argues that young people today are entering adolescence earlier and healthier; more likely to spend their adolescence in school; more likely to postpone entry into the labour force; and more likely to delay marriage and childbearing. As a result of these changes young people, especially those in the developing world including Africa, have more time and opportunities than ever before to reflect about what their futures would be and acquire the information and skills necessary to become effective participants in decisions about their own lives and futures.

Among the Setswana of Botswana adolescence is referred to as *go ithalefa* literally meaning a period of self-discovery and usually beginning at about age 11 to adulthood (Shumba & Seeco 2007) and emphasising the psychological significance of identity formation and understanding. The Bamileke of Cameroon conceptualise three phases of adolescence (Tchombe 2007). They term the 6 to 12 years *moo-h-goh* "girl child and *moo-h-seup* "boy child" marked by circumcision socialisation into practical life and participation in community activities. The 12- to 15-year-olds are referred to as *tchieu-goh* "young girl" and *tchieu-seup* "young boy" characterised by identity formation retreat and isolation. Finally the 15- to 20-year-olds are known as *Goh* "girl" and *Seup* "boy" with capacities for marriage submission to parents elders social laws and regulations. These conceptualisations give the youth more natural outlets for their interests and powers allowing

them to grow up freely into full responsibility in their community (Tchombe 2007). However some African societies for example those of Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo do not consider adolescence as a stage of life (Bangurambona 2007; Ntotila 2007). Rather they maintain a developmental trail that is continuous beginning from childhood and running to adulthood with opportunities for training for independent and autonomous livelihood.

Next generations analyses from Africa's current demographic trends are critical for five interrelated but often ignored reasons (Nsamenang 2007). First nowhere are children born with the knowledge responsible values and skills with which to face adolescence or cope with the challenges of transition into adulthood. Children learn them during ontogeny from an early age in African cultures. But the institution whose role is to prepare Africa's next generation the school seems oblivious of this fact of African cultures. This is because education curricula in African countries are deficient in stark local realities and systematic national content as well as oblivious of national skills needs and labour market requirements.

Secondly having been forced-fit into European Enlightenment narratives which are ways of organising thought and child life that are alien to most people around the world (Cannella & Viruru 2004); parental societal and official attitudes worldwide now marginalise and underrate the young therein constricting youth potentials and narrowing analytic frames and visions.

Thirdly all children face difficulty in the tortuous transitions from conception through adolescence to the maturity and responsibility of adulthood sometimes due to often paradoxical conditions coexisting in the same societies such as affluences and poverty or indulgence and deprivation. The resilience inherent in some of the daunting youth conditions have not even been recognised much less documented. There is blindness to developmental pathways and transitions that have never been imagined by western disciplinary theories.

Fourthly factors responsible for population growth make for both problems and possibilities. While higher population densities might engender higher crime rates and greater chances of epidemics

population explosion could generate a larger workforce and a bigger consumer base which can boost economic growth if properly harnessed. With this young people could begin to get close to financial independence with fewer problems.

Finally next-generations analyses tend to be framed from western ideological positioning of transmitting universal (western) knowledge skills and policy frameworks instead of from a post-modernist platform of every society transmitting its cultural curriculum and patterns of livelihood. All these underscore the African garden metaphors which connote a gradual unfolding of human abilities and serial attainment of levels of maturity and valued competencies at various "way stations" of human ontogenesis (Nsamenang 1992). In addition next-generation analysis for sub-Saharan Africa neglect the resilience and resourcefulness with which youth in most countries in the region encounter negotiate and surmount significant obstacles to the transition to adulthood.

According to Nsamenang (2007), discourse on Africa's youth has not transcended the rhetoric of "calamity" that visualises casts and intervenes the young as problematic cohorts in the tedium of global imperatives offered to humanity by western civilisation. There is little understanding and doubtful data on the circumstances and imagined futures of Africa's huge next generations in their own experiences and voices. There are no published studies in the literature directly assessing the future expectations of African youth (Nsamenang 2007). Much of what has won the discourse in the literature is based on expert observations of researchers prying at adolescents (e.g. the discourse of African adolescents in Arnett 2007). The danger of data-scarce discourse and interventions is that they are driven by assumptions that misguide policy formulation and programming and falsify anticipated outcome indicators (Nsamenang 2007).

The Case of Cameroon

Cameroon is one of the 47 nation states in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) located in the Central African sub-region. Sub-Saharan Africa "stretches from the northern borders of Mauritania eastward across the Sudan to the horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean islands and down to its southern border the Cape of Good Hope in

South Africa" (Nsamenang & Lo-oh in press; Tchombe 1999). Therefore Cameroon is situated in Central Africa (CA) stretching northwards to the Sahara desert and emptying southwards to the Atlantic Ocean it is one of those occupying Sub-Saharan Africa. Cameroon shares boundaries with Nigeria to the West Chad to the North East Central African Republic to the East Congo Gabon and Equatorial Guinea to the South. Cameroon has a coastal line of 402 kilometres (km) which boards the Gulf of Guinea. It has an area of 475 000km squared. Land constitutes 466464km squared while water makes up 8536km squared. The country Cameroon is predominantly rural and agrarian so that most of its nationals live and work in rural areas (Tchombe 1999). The country's population increased from 13.5 million in 1995 to about 17 million in 2005 (MINPLADAT 2006). The distribution shows that about 79 per cent of the population are francophone while the rest (21%) are Anglophone. The population has more youths (56.3%) and women (50.1%). About 70 per cent of youths from rural areas immigrate to urban towns in search of jobs and educational opportunities. The literacy rate is about 64 per cent with more illiterate women (53.4%) than men (39.2%). Unemployment rate increased from 08.10 per cent (2001) to 10.70 per cent in 2005 while graduate unemployment was highest at 13.40 per cent. The family structure has gradually shifted from polygamy in the eighties to monogamy in the advent of the 21st century.

Like other SSA countries, Cameroon displays diversity in flora and fauna topography political regimes demographic profile ethno-linguistic composition (Nsamenang & Lo-oh in press; Lo-oh 2007) and colonial historical legacies. In fact it has often been referred to as "Africa in miniature" given its outstanding diverse characteristics peculiar of the rest of the continent. Cameroon like the rest of Africa is richly endowed with natural resources and human capital but it cannot afford to finance its human development services or fund research of its developmental contexts without foreign aid (Nsamenang & Lo-oh in press). This could be partly explained by the continent's inability to use youth potentials or manage them to fruition the "imposition of foreign ideological systems" (Lo-oh 2005 p.115) and imposed western expertise and technologies (Nsamenang 2007)

which heavily orient and determine the pathway for progress and development in Africa. Nevertheless by the year 2000 many African communities including Cameroon are entering the first wave of experiential learning and adoption of digital technologies in education and other facets of their development (Fuchs 2003), thereby gradually shading the digital gap. The expectation is that by the year 2015 Africa's naivety would have been eliminated so that it is able to succinctly face its problems (one of them adequately empowering the youth and preparing them for work and adult life) with inevitable solutions.

In Cameroon, countless situations and places in both urban and village settings expose children and youth to daily risks and vulnerabilities (Nsamenang 2007). These are milieus where young people especially girls are at heightened risk and easy susceptibility to HIV infection unwanted pregnancy and other reproductive health risks. Action research has identified some of these risk factors as social vices ignorance misperceptions peer pressure cultural traditions powerlessness and ineffective or absent parental support and guidance (N'Sambuka & Allen 2002). Most of these risks are brought about by rapid changes in the social arenas and political spheres (Nsamenang 2007). In a baseline survey in Bamenda Cameroon young people reported promiscuity (82%) unemployment (53%) and HIV/AIDS (37%) as major risks that endanger their imagined futures of adulthood. Like youth parents also expressed views acknowledging the bleak future for today's youth. Among impediments mentioned some of the youth voiced disconnectedness from service providers life skills and serviceable developmental information and topical issues in their communities and the world. Acceptable youth services especially counseling entrepreneurship education job shadowing programs can be effective mechanisms of dealing with transitioning youth problems and preparing them for responsible adulthood. Such programs have worked in Ghana Uganda and Kenya (Moya 2002) and could also work elsewhere in the continent.

However in Cameroon the current arrangement for youth and educational offerings are in about six government ministries even though other ministries offer specific training programmes. Firstly

the Ministry of Basic Education is in charge of nursery and primary education; the Ministry of Secondary Education is in charge of secondary general and technical education; the Ministry of Higher Education is responsible for university education at both professional and academic levels; the Ministry of Scientific and Technical Research addresses research endeavours as a whole; the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training is in charge of youth employment and vocational training; meanwhile, the Ministry of Youth Affairs provides quality assistance towards youth development. We realise that the historic and political background weigh heavily on the country's educational system. The existing difference in structure examination duration practices and basic qualifications has been undergoing harmonization since 2002 (MINEDUC 2002). But the educational system has remained centrally examination oriented.

Problems Affecting Generational Preparation and Investment

Sub-Saharan Africa displays diversity in flora and fauna topography political regimes demographic profile ethno-linguistic composition and status of scientific and service disciplines like psychology and developmental science (Nsamenang & Lo-oh in press). In spite of these the region has the worst performance of any region of the world on virtually any measure of living standards including per capita income access to clean water life expectancy infant mortality and prevalence of diseases particularly HIV/AIDS (Lloyd 2005; Nsamenang 2002). Various development strategies and approaches have been offered as solutions to the continent's problems ranging from the large scale infusion of external financial and other capital resources to alternative approaches that emphasise "endo-genous" self-reliant sustainable development and/or "development from within" (Bell 1986; McDougall 1990). Despite all the development efforts the major problems faced by the majority of African peoples have still not been resolved. In paradox most African countries are rich in natural resources, including petroleum gold diamonds timber wildlife (Nsamenang 2007). Another paradox is that even with its rich natural resources the continent has not been able to fund its education and youth programmes. Rather there have been reports of such resources being harnessed

and exported to feed the western world, with nothing in return.

Despite some upturn in economic growth rates poverty is still widespread and, in many parts of the continent, extremely high. Investment remains subdued limiting efforts to diversify economic structures and boost growth. Furthermore a number of countries have only recently emerged from civil wars that have severely set back their development efforts while sadly new armed conflicts have erupted in other parts of the continent (e.g. the crises in Sudan Congo Zimbabwe Northern Uganda and so on). These conflicts and other adverse factors, such as health (e.g. HIV/AIDS and malaria) poverty corrupt practices and greed have led to some loss in economic momentum in the region over the past decades, making it impossible for smooth transitions to occur.

The new technological age is also leaving the African youth poorer in ICT knowledge skills and global reach (Nsamenang 2007). For example according to internetworldstats.com (2007) Africa contributes 14.2 per cent of world population but has only 3.0 per cent of global internet users. While the benefits of ICTs are obvious an often ignored but crucial fact is that ICTs alienate huge but restive cohorts of African youngsters from their cultural roots. For example the new phenomena of Internet negotiated marriages scamming or fraud transfusion of new cultural and moral values and so on constitute the web of Africa's youth transition which needs to be reshaped and re-examined to effectively prepare the future hope of the continent. There is need for Technology-Assisted Youth Programs where young people could be trained and guided in ICT use. This would eventually provide access to information and, as a result, bring them closer to the global economy.

Sub-Saharan African countries therefore face major challenges: to raise growth and reduce poverty and to integrate themselves into the world economy. Economic growth rates are still not high enough to make a real venture in curbing poverty and increasing the chances for finding work and bridging the gap between school and work and also preparing for adulthood. There is the absence of political will and love for nation-building which translates to poor policy and decision-

making including policy implementation. It becomes compelling to examine how the transition to adulthood is changing in developing countries including Cameroon and what the implications of these changes might be for those responsible for designing youth policies and programmes in fact those affecting adolescent reproductive health.

Conclusion

It is common knowledge that any serious policy for social political and economic development in a developing society like Africa has the responsibility to recognize the importance of young people especially in promoting social progress reducing political tension and maximizing economic performance. Again the pace depth and scope of any society's development depend on how well its youth resources are nurtured deployed and utilized (African Development Forum 2006). Youth have several potential advantages for national social and economic development. The social advantages include a greater degree of mobility versatility openness adaptability and tolerance while in economic terms young people provide dynamism in the supply of labour required for faster economic growth (ADF 2006).

An increasing number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa are showing signs of economic progress however reflecting the implementation of better economic policies and structural reforms. These countries have successfully cut domestic and external financial imbalances enhancing economic efficiency. They have given greater priority to public spending on health care education and other basic social services. Nonetheless on the overall the economic and social situation in sub-Saharan Africa remains fragile and vulnerable to domestic and external shocks and the region has a long way to go to make up for the ground lost over the past decades.

However Africa's children and youth do not merit their undesirable and unfortunate condition. They need to be gainfully and creatively guided prepared and assisted through childhood adolescence to adulthood. This paper has demonstrated that attempts to lead Africa's effective generational preparation has witnessed a number of issues unaddressed distorted ignored or taken for granted. First and foremost, it is very important for African nation states and western collaborators

to shift from a narrative of turmoil and tragedy to one which handles young people as assets which need to be nurtured cared for and directed early in life. Again in the attempt to surmount their awful circumstances African youth demonstrate resilience and resourcefulness. These are attributes which deserve research attention discourse and programmatic enhancement. This brings forth new frontiers of child and youth research shifts from demographic to subjective transition trajectories to adulthood.

Moreover it is important to shift from the disaggregated data on youth into building evidenced-based images of young people in every country and for the continent. The contemporary image of Africa's youth has been revealed largely by observers who are cut off from local conditions and realities confined with their computers uncritical of bad data and ignorant of how people live are prone to construct for themselves and their colleagues costly worlds of fantasy prophesying doom and prescribing massive programs which are neither needed nor feasible (Chambers 1997). It is increasingly important to begin to seek scientific understanding of African youth from their own voices and experiences. Their experiences and perceptions are surely an important source of data (Smith 2005). They should raise important theoretical questions and expanded visions of the social contexts of children and youth and their preparation for adulthood and the workforce.

Furthermore the magnitude of high risk of HIV transmission war conflict hunger and poverty demand a better understanding of the phenomena and the consequences for reproductive health social and economic empowerment and responsible adulthood. This requires significant scientific research strides. In addition parental and familial resources including societal institutions remain central agencies in preparing the next generations. But the situation is more difficult for African parents families social institutions including governments which have to complete this heavy duty amidst competing contexts of indigenous and imported factors. Current interventions in Africa are not mounted on Africa's normative systems and achievements. Instead intervention programmes concentrate not on enhancing indigenous African skill repertoires knowledge systems and generative capacities but on perfecting mechanisms to

bypass and/or replace them (Nsamenang 2007). Africa will not develop from implanting Euro-American civilisation onto its indigenous heritage but will make progress and transition into sustainable modernity through creative renovation and updating of early imported designs to suit the realities of Africa today.

The progress of Africa hinges more on listening to and learning from the African worldview seeing a holistic and integrated way of looking at the family and the universe in order to see things in a new way (Callaghan 1998). Renascent Africa will require an education system that is deeply rooted in the African soul – the family – and retains Africa's participative spirit and processes in sense of community with responsible and intergenerational shift. However in today's world of globalisation youth programs and transition efforts will largely depend on balancing and enhancing in the local context the benefits of institutions educational systems and service packages that reflect both local and global forces. In this way many more of the problems of transition would be overcome making way, for effective generational preparation.

Note

* This paper is a breed of my on-going PhD Research on "Adolescent Subjective Perception of Adulthood: Its Effects on Attitude to Schooling as a Transition Process"; and an on-going Jacobs Foundation funded research on "Africa's Youth and the Future of Work: Developing Strategies, Building Skills and Preparing the Next Generation of Cameroon".

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From 'Foreign Natives' to 'Native Foreigners'

Explaining Xenophobia in Post-apartheid South Africa

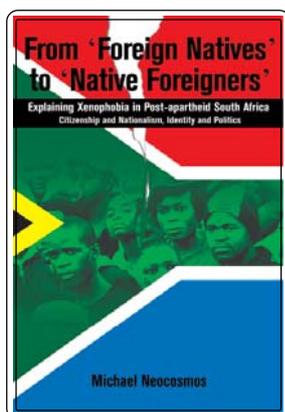
Citizenship and Nationalism, Identity and Politics

Michael Neocosmos

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The events of May 2008 in which 62 people were killed simply for being 'foreign' and thousands were turned overnight into refugees shook the South African nation. This book is the first to attempt a comprehensive and rigorous explanation for those horrific events. It argues that xenophobia should be understood as a political discourse and practice. As such its historical development as well as the conditions of its existence must be elucidated in terms of the practices and prescriptions which structure the field of politics. In South Africa, the history of xenophobia is intimately connected to the manner in which citizenship has been conceived and fought over during the past fifty years at least.

Youth's game-playing in Ivorian Public Space: Involving the Youth of Street Dialogue Spaces in Politics

Introduction

Abidjan folks were awakened, one April morning of 1990, by hordes of young people booing the President of the Republic and chanting *Houphouët thief! Houphouët thief!* In primary schools, the younger ones followed close on the heels of their elders holding up slates where you could read *Houphouët thief! No school! We are hungry!* (Baulin 2000:136). The same year, the Zouglou established itself across Côte d'Ivoire as a challenging and protest music. In 2002, in northern Côte d'Ivoire, the rebels of Côte d'Ivoire Patriotic Movement (MPCI) are led by Soro Kigbofori Guillaume who was deemed by many Ivorian socio-political observers as too young to assume such a responsibility. But he will even reach higher by becoming the head of the Ivorian Government in 2007. In Abidjan, Douk Saga and his friends from the Jet Set launched in 2003 the 'Coupé-décalé' to 'Save Côte d'Ivoire'.

These were the forerunning signs of the youth's growing influence in the Ivorian public space over the past few years. And the purpose of this article is to determine the modes of the youth's intervention in politics. Through observations and interviews, it purports to determine the participation of young people with reference to Street Dialogue Spaces (SDSs) which have emerged in Côte d'Ivoire since the 80s. The survey covers all active spaces on either side of the two borders, separating the government-controlled zone from the rebel-controlled one. Remember that the military and political conflict that erupted on September 19, 2002 split the country into two: the South controlled by loyalist forces or Defence and Security Forces (FDS) and the North held by the Rebellion or Armed Forces of the New Forces (FAFN).

The Youth in Ivorian Politics

The Ivorian public space is gradually brought to life by a new category of actors: the youth of street dialogue spaces. Who are they? Where do you find them and why?

Silue Oumar
Universiyé de Bouaké
Côte d'Ivoire

The Youth of Street Dialogue Spaces in Ivorian Public Space

The Ivorian Youth, Education and Sports Ministry defined as youth anybody between 18 to 35 age range (INS 1998), considered a period in one's life half-way between childhood and adulthood. According to some authors, the youth biological age is limited to all individuals under 25 years (Wrzesińska 1995:65). Others believe, however, that it is difficult to set limits based on rigid biological criteria since the youth also show concern for political, economic, social and cultural considerations (Mbembe 1991, Comaroff 2000). The vision of the youth is that of a complex reality, though in this article the limits are arbitrarily set around 25 to 40 age range.

Street dialogue spaces are where young individuals meet to critically look at the latest developments in political events. These debates most often take place, as they are described, next to public places and involve actors whose actions have an impact on the Ivorian socio-political life. In these places where opinions are expressed and formed, they read about events through the prism of their conflicting convictions. In most cases, the debates are led by jobless and unmarried young men living in the popular suburbs of Abidjan (Yopougon, Abobo, Koumassi). "Agoras and parliaments" take the form of political meetings led by orators who attract audiences in the hundreds and even thousands. On the other hand, "Grins" are groups (discreet and more limited in number) of people who assemble around a tea pot boiling on a charcoal stove; the tea party is very often accompanied by the consumption of meat and peanuts.

SDSs surfaced in Côte d'Ivoire during the 80s. The first one to be formally identified is the "Sorbonne" located in the Plateau

district of Abidjan. To determine, historically this space is tantamount to being interested in the public space concept in Côte d'Ivoire. To Leimdorfer, the concept refers to both a physical and symbolic space shared by a variety of actors and whose access and multifarious uses are guaranteed by a power (State, President, ministries, municipalities, ethnic communities) (Leimdorfer 1999:53). From a Habermasian perspective, public space is this intermediate sphere, this half-way between the State and the Civil Society, which was formed during the Lumières era and in which public opinion is built through dialogue (Habermas 1997:38-40). But in Wolton's view, public space cannot be proclaimed (Wolton 2000:222). Opening public space to different expressions of opinions does not suffice to create a public space. Aghi Bahi sees the "Sorbonne" as one of the non-bourgeois places of birth of public space (Bahi 2003:7). This public space is where different religious, economic, social, cultural and political actors aggregate although mutually opposed by historically situated values.

Bourdieu developed his space theory to explain attitude diversity and mobility. He divided space into "fields". These fields are for example art, sport, literature, politics, etc. with a hierarchical relationship (Bourdieu 1980). Space building is the way you represent hierarchical structures between different fields, within the latter. Space is not granted. It is the product of a construction based on a multitude of objective power relations forced upon all actors involved in a field, regardless of their mutual perceptions and intentions. Power relations are forged according to different categories and quantities of power or "capital". Thus, one will find in SDSs economic capital (in its different forms), cultural capital (education, vocational and general training, taste, sensation, music, etc.) and symbolic capital (prestige, reputation, fame, honours, etc.). The political field includes all political institutions, that is, the State, the other public communities and several actors who are hard to identify (Maugenest 2005).

The political field takes on in these places a combat form to ensure a legitimate perception of the social world. The purpose here is to conquer – through space reconstruction – the power to form groups or categories with their characteristics and properties, whether good or bad. The effective production of social groups (re)categorised by these actors is aimed at maintaining or modifying hierarchical positions between fields – political, economic, cultural, social, etc., denying access to certain groups – stigmatised ones – , certain fields and/or restricting to certain groups the potential benefits that certain fields might generate. Even though, by their activities, SDSs are interested in culture, sport, etc., they have focused more on the political field where they have really captured much attention.

In Crises Maelstrom: Inventing Street Dialogue Spaces

SDSs appeared in a context of deep social changes, as socio-professional mobility narrowed for the youth. During the period from 1980 to 1990, Côte d'Ivoire plunged into a cycle of economic recession, the causes of which are linked to both external and internal factors. Indeed, falling prices of raw materials on international markets, oil shocks, drought, over indebtedness resulting from state investments¹ (for the sake of prestige and non profitable in some cases) and public finance mismanagement can be held as the key causes of the crisis.

The Ivorian economy which mostly relies on export cash crops was destabilised by the deteriorating terms of raw materials trading. Recourse to foreign investments, too limited internal savings and insufficient crop diversification are some of the factors making Côte d'Ivoire unable to resist the collapse of coffee and cocoa prices as from 1978. Subsequently, external debt increased fourfold between 1975 and 1979. Adding to this huge debt were balance of payment and budgetary deficits which represented 17.4 per cent and 11.9 per cent of GDP respectively. Côte d'Ivoire had no choice but to turn to the Bretton-Woods institutions for a first Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which was implemented over the 1981-1983 period, followed by two other SAPs in 1983 and 1986 (Akindès 2000). With these programmes, it was required of the

country to reduce spending and raise earnings; these conditionalities affected mostly city dwellers and particularly the youth, a vulnerable component of the population.

The SAPs led to an increase in urban transport fares, oil prices, water and electricity bills as well as food commodity prices. The prices went spiralling while there was a freeze on salaries paid in the civil service, and many state-controlled companies were shut down. Concurrently, between 1980 and 1984, per capita GDP plummeted by 26.2 per cent. In 1984, recruitments by the civil service were reduced, restricting young graduates' access to employment in this sector or in State-owned companies while also contracting the number of scholarships granted to university and secondary school students. The hardships of daily life reflected by this set of indicators will result in the emergence of what Ivorians termed "conjuncture" (current economic situation) to describe the country's deteriorating economic situation in comparison to the previous era.

It was in the context of the economic crisis of the 80s that the Abidjan-based "Sorbonne" came into being. Old "Philo"² and other Ivorian job seekers used to meet in the public squares of Abidjan business centre to "kill time" and criticise President Houphouët Boigny's management of the country until they can find a job. In 2002, it was not until dissension appeared between the "Sorbonne" leaders that this space split into 3 blocs. The first bloc made up of "Agoras and Parliaments" are close to the ruling party, the Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) while the second bloc is led by young followers who identify with the opposition ideologies, notably the party of former Prime Minister, Alassane Dramane Ouattara, known as the Rally of the Republicans (RDR) (Théroux-Bénoni and Bahi 2005:9-12). Lastly, the third bloc to appear on the Ivorian scene lately captured the spaces of the rebellion-controlled zone which identified with its ideology (Silué 2006). The most famous of them is the "Senate" based in Bouaké, a city hosting the main administrative services of the Ivorian Rebellion. Street dialogue spaces have rallied behind political parties or organisations whose ultimate goal is to rule the country. Beyond what may be described as rapprochement or inter-connec-

tion with the political sphere, the youth of these spaces have (re)invented a new culture.

Youth's Game-playing in Politics

SDSs are close to political parties or organisations with ties to them. These spaces have enriched public space by inventing new practices.

In the Heart of the Violence: Street Education

SDSs have contributed to a general street culture, emerging in spaces forsaken to structural violence. Erupting at the borderline of this many-sided violence (Biaya 2000), new forms of social practices have become to be known as 'standing parliaments' in Kinshasa, DRC and 'Grins' in Mali, Burkina-Faso and other sub-Saharan countries (Kieffer 2006). Long disappointed by the failed promises made by the leaders, young people have invented ways of exteriorising their feelings and frustrations somewhere in-between the confines of legality and illegality, of what is permissible and forbidden.

SDSs have appeared in this context as alternative places for education and training. The names they give themselves tell us a lot on this educational project. "Grins" is one of the names covered by a generic term like "University of Free Time" (UTL)³ while "Agoras and Parliaments" are referred to as "Open Sky University" with a faculty of political science" (Bahi 2003:4). Identity building is reflected here in a symbolic that turns streets into amphitheatres where "teachers" teach classes to students and also with key "Lab work".⁴ The orators of "Agoras and Parliaments" and "Senate" called *professors* display their knowledge and language skills in front of audiences who carry along sometime their pens and writing pads to take notes.

"Grins" look like African traditional societies who operate on the principles (respect for elders, abnegation and discipline) governing relationship between elder and younger generations. Roles (the most visible being *Kôrô* and *dôgô*)⁵ have not been formally systematised in a written document. But they have become established with time, and failure to abide by this organisation carries sanctions ranging from fines to chores being imposed upon someone or someone be-

ing banned in the worst case. “Kôro is an incarnation of wisdom. He behaves irreproachably in the moral sense. He is a model for his behaviour that everyone admires” (Silué 2006). The youngest or *dôgô* are assigned to preparing and serving tea. And of course, they are also in charge of buying sugar and tea at meal time.

SDSs are alternative education places offering the youth category new possibilities for knowledge building. The documents on sale in the “Agoras and Parliaments” and the “Senate” contribute to youth intellectual enrichment and prepare them for accessing political city state. This political socialisation also trains the youth in oral (speaking in public), discussion and debate skills. Not surprisingly the “Sorbonne” slogan is “words of mouth, words of mouth only” while the “Grins” slogan is *akilisso*,⁶ so to put the focus on the major role of discourse practices in these spaces.

Citizenship commitment has also been strongly inculcated in the actors of SDSs. Unfolding alongside the republican values preached are debates allowing citizens to reflect, in their own way, on the future of their country. This commitment at times is ground for nationalist sentiment or collective fears against a real or imaginary enemy. “Agoras and Parliaments” describe France and the United Nations Organisation (UNO) as having instigated the September 19, 2002 war in Côte d’Ivoire (Banégas 2006, Marshall 2005). The “Grins” and the “Senate” do not trust the ruling party and its affiliate press (Théroux-Bénoni et Bahi 2005, Silué 2006).

A Safety Net: Inventing New Solidarity Ties

SDSs have emerged as places for building solidarity ties. In an environment where you have to be resourceful, these spaces operate as structures that fill the gaps for weak integration institutions such as the family. SDSs have become part of the social organisation of the suburbs. Initially a meeting place for young, secondary school goers or drop-outs, they have gradually turned into refuges as members grow older.

This community is a foster family where members are educated. Street dialogue space is a place for socialisation or a continuation of traditional organisation model

founded on the principles governing intergenerational relationship (Kieffer 2006:70). The new family structure reproduced relies on values such as brotherhood and solidarity. All the members know one another to the extent that individual qualities, defects and tastes are no secret to anyone of them. Members’ union ties are also strengthened through sports and other socio-cultural activities.

During protests, this solidarity can quickly turn into herd instinct, not only between individuals, but between organisations as well. Thus, when a structure organises an activity, the others throw their energies into it to make the project a success. This solidarity operates between blocs. For instance, when a meeting is organised by the “Powerful Abobo Conference” (TPCA), the orators of other spaces like the “Sorbonne” provide support either by taking the floor or adding to the human resources. The vitality of the solidarity tie is the best life insurance in Ivorian politics because it is indicative of mobilisation capacity. The rapprochement between political leaders and street dialogue spaces can be explained in part by the latter’s capacity to mobilise large crowds during inter-party power tests.

Presumably, it was the saturation of the solidarity tie between members of SDSs, as they came into contact with the political world, that turned them into a militia in the Duverger sense. That is to say organisations with military attributes (“security” services or departments, salutes, uniforms, drills and military languages) or in some cases, creation of armed militia as is currently the case of Pastor Gammi, head of *Mouvement Ivoirien de Libération de l’Ouest de la Côte d’Ivoire (MILOCI)* and orator at the Abidjan-based “Sorbonne”. Others like Maguy le Tocard, orator at the “Sorbonne”, also operate a militia. Willy Djimi, orator at one of the Parliament of the popular suburb of Yopougon and a regularly registered sociology graduate student at the University of Cocody in Abidjan is also a chief militiaman. Trained in commando techniques, these men are mobilised to ensure security during “Agoras and Parliaments” demonstrations. The “Grins” and the “Senate” also have their security operatives who are deployed to “protect” members of the parties they are close to.

Street Dialogue Spaces as Political Ideology Dissemination Instruments

The history of street dialogue spaces in Côte d’Ivoire has clearly shown that at a given time of their evolution, they gave in to political temptation. Originally, the first space known as the “Sorbonne” showed interest in all topical subjects (economics, health, agriculture, etc.); the process of political exploitation actually started in 1999 under President Guéi Robert’s administration. In 2002, war eruption led to the birth of blocs and inter-bloc war. Aware of the advantage they can reap from SDSs, political leaders moved closer and closer to them. As an immediate consequence of that move, SDSs were transformed into political ideology dissemination medium.

The actors of SDSs are in some ways political actors. They take far-reaching political decisions and make their voices heard by those who have been officially proclaimed political leaders as per their positions. As such, their political legitimacy has been acknowledged and accepted by all. Based on this legitimacy, they can take positions regarding the events taking place on the Ivorian political scene. On the other hand, despite the fact that they have no official recognition as a political organisation, SDSs operate with their self-proclaimed. This is because these organisations position themselves at the heart of the political game, especially through their close ties to political parties. With the eruption of the war, the *Congrès National de Résistance pour la Démocratie (CNRD)*, a coalition of all political parties with close ties to the presidential movement, has a membership including the *Fédération Nationale des Agoras et Parlements de Côte d’Ivoire (FENAAPCI)* and the *Fédération Nationale des Orateurs des Parlements et Agoras de Côte d’Ivoire (FENOPACI)*. Ideology is propagated in three ways. Young people open their spaces to politicians for meetings. To maintain themselves in activity, the spaces in turn approach politicians. Other factors facilitating ideology propagation include actors’ mobility (through the communes) especially orators, emotion building and speech writing with political leaders (Silué 2007). Finally, Youth’s interconnections with political actors pave the way for them to convert political capital into socio-economic capital.

At the Heart of the Political Game: Between Resourcefulness and Vote-catching

Since 1990, Côte d'Ivoire has been witnessing an extreme politicisation of individual interrelations. Any event quickly takes a public and political turn. Company workers' strike, student movements etc. are all turned into a 'presidential matter'. Political parties are increasing in number with their influence over the management of public affairs. In this game, SDS youth most of whom are out of jobs exchange their political capital for advantages and services from political leaders. Indeed:

In this country, the only people who do not feel the impact of economic crisis are the politicians; they have access to all services. If you want to be successful, you'd better get closer to them.⁷

Young SDS actors are quite aware of the fact that they are using their political positioning to bargain for their socio-professional integration. There is a flow of services and gifts between the youth and political leaders.

Youth are responsible for resource mobilisation, which covers organisation of meetings between the political party youth and their leaders, preparing (bus seeking, distribution of T-shirts, flyers and other activist gadgets, sale of gadgets, etc.) the audiences for the leaders by preceding them to highly strategic spots, warming up meetings and power tests (punitive operations against turncoats or opponents, marching or picket line, intimidation, etc.) In exchange for these services, SDSs youth have access to privileges that range from conservation of their spaces, obtaining cash or privileges to getting a job. The FENAAPCI President is a student in tax administration at the *Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA)*, many of the "Parliament" orators have been employed since 2008 by the Abidjan Port Authority (*PAA*). Many others have entered the police training school and other departments of public administration. In its June 17, 2005 issue, the *Courrier d'Abidjan* newspaper wrote in this connection that:

The President of Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI), Pascal Affi N'Guessan, was about to offer a lot of equipments to the National Federation of Ivorian Agoras and Parliament (FENAAPCI), led by Idriss Ouattara (...). According

to our sources, FPI President's support to Agoras and Parliaments – fifty in number – located across the entire Ivorian territory, will consist in donating practical equipments. That is to say tools that "Parliamentarians" need in discharging their activities. These include indeed many megaphones, loud speakers, complete sound equipment, benches, tarpaulins, etc., which orators and the public need during debates. (...) In reality, the FPI President's tour to explain the crisis in the Agoras and Parliaments of Abidjan at crisis peak was in response to the grievances of these places leadership.⁸

In the "Grins" and the "Senate", underlying the political struggle is economic logic. When you integrate a dialogue space, your purpose is to tap any economic resources that are likely to improve your difficult social condition. Thus, for a member:

With the on-going crisis, the Grin generates hope for economic integration because it allows you to build a small network of relations, and when you are in perfect control, you can then win bids, contracts or get a petty job [K. 15 September, 2006].

The oratorical contest market is favourable to "Parliaments" and "Senate" orators all the more so as it tends to become professionalised. At the "Sorbonne", these orators make a daily FCFA 15,000 to 20,000 not to mention the small "occasional treats" which they receive from those who invited them. These are meals with a menu made of grilled fish or meat, a spicy soup and attiéké served with beverages. This festive atmosphere is palpable since the announcement of future presidential elections for November 29, 2009. The counterpart for exchanging with the youth is their mobilisation capacity served by new information and communication technologies (NICTs).

Space Domination Through Control of NICTs

NICTs have deeply modified the operation of SDSs. Between 1980 and 2009, spaces re-appropriated the modern communication media appearing in Côte d'Ivoire. Traditional media like radios were mobilised according to their political inclination. In 'Parliaments and Agoras', the opposition press and international media are perceived as 'collaborators' of the

Rebellion. *Radio France Internationale (RFI)* fell victim of this suspicious feeling to the extent that it was called *Radio Rubbish International*. On the other hand, in the "Grins" and the "Senate", international media such as RFI, British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Africa N° 1 and Voice of America (VOA) were praised because they were deemed more credible and impartial.

Web resources top the list of instruments used to prepare speeches for SDS actors. Information on topical issues is tapped from it. Hours are spent in cyber cafés downloading onto electronic and flash discs a data base on issues of interest to them.

The freedom to communicate can at times give you an edge. In Côte d'Ivoire, the coup d'Etat of December 24, 1999 was coordinated through a cell phone (Kieffer 2000:28). The young insurgents used their cell phones to convey orders on the management of this military action. Soro Kigbafori Guillaume used a satellite phone to coordinate the coup d'Etat of September 19, 2002 (Soro 2005:85), and Charles Blé Goudé, leader of COJEP also used his cell phone during the November 2004 events (Blé 2006:110).

Cell phone is used as a device to mobilise collective actions. It allows fast and secure communication of watchwords on the ground. One official of this space explained to us how messages are circulated through the cell phone:

When there is an urgent message to convey, General Blé Goudé calls Richard, yes they are not together. Now, he is the one calling the different officials to convey watchwords to the different Parliaments and Agoras of Côte d'Ivoire. Thus, when you reach an individual, you are in touch with the whole structure. Anyway, cell phone is an essential tool for us [G. 6 May, 2006].

While those surveyed were unable to exactly quantify the number of message dispatches, texting has, however, become fully integrated in the communication mechanism of SDSs. And yet, the frequency of texting varies according to what is happening on the political scene. In a crisis period, texting is used more intensively.

We regularly exchange messages. But when there is a movement, that is to

say, when political activity is tense, texting is used more frequently. When you have a CFAF 1,000 credit recharge, it may be exhausted in less than an hour. The credit recharge is quickly exhausted but texting is done also faster [K., member of Sorbonne, May 6, 2006].

Texting also acts as a security device for the young people because the parties involved can discreetly send and receive messages (Martin 2007:107; Journet 2007:28). This feature is particularly appreciated as it allows them to communicate rapidly in crisis situations without drawing the attention of their surroundings. The concern for security by those involved justifies the coded language used in communicational transactions. A form of writing only known to, and shared by, members of these spaces was even devised. The language was created and maintained in order to protect the identity of some people and the confidential nature of some so-called strategic pieces of information. The confidential nature of messages has led them to create a "sacred" form of writing, in other words, a written language only known to a few. Texting uses a language level which very often does not follow the writing standards of the French language.

In the 1980s, NICTs invasion of Africa (Chénau-Loquay 2003:122) brought the Ivorian youth under the influence of video clubs.⁹ When CDs, VCDs and DVDs emerged on the market in 2000, political actors finally had an opportunity to go into film production. Because not all political leaders' speeches could reach the population since the latter cannot follow them in their tours, CDs and CD-ROMs were thus recorded by SDSs notably the "Sorbonne" and other leaders of the patriotic galaxy. These media are then sold at the "Sorbonne" at a rebate (between CFAF 500 and 1000).

Space control through NICTs deployment is indicative of the youth's attempt to control the future. They finally see them as a way of projecting themselves into a bright future in which they have full control over current threats and opportunities. Space here is plural, fragmented, informal, deregulated with little weights allocated to time management and matter. The manipulations derived from the use of cell phones, Ipods and computers have given birth to a *homo electrus*, gifted with

such skills as will allow him/her to dominate his/her space and subject it through his/her imposition of standards. When the space produced by the youth tries to become formalised, to establish its identity and standard, social elders look at it with circumspection. It becomes suspicious. Elders see through the visible cracks left by the youth what they suspect to be an invention of a new protean sub-culture and a new idea generating order the confusing and defuse outlines of which are both fascinating and scary.

Reinventing Youth Culture

SDSs mirror a microcosm of Ivorian political circles. They are the forewarning signs of the emergence of new forms of sociability.

Producing New Success Figures

SDSs contribute to the process of city state production by the youth. Between resourcefulness and violence, they have invented new forms of sociability to circumvent or break the rules preventing them from expressing themselves. The youth's use of violence in politics is a way of giving vent to the resentments linked to the structural violence (unemployment, school dysfunctions, weak social networks, etc.) with which they have to cope every single day. One of their answers to the situation is another form of violence through mass protest, pirating intellectual properties, marches, strikes, physical and/or oral confrontations between these spaces and the armed forces (police, gendarmes, etc.) on the one hand, and between the spaces themselves, on the other. When cornered after dialogue failed with their elder city state managers, they then use force out of anger. Thus, nowadays when they want to be listened to, outbreaks of violence operate as collective catharsis through which they can exteriorise their long contained frustrations.

Violence further appears as a resource, a tool with which the youth can acquire political power. By the use of force, they make their way to power by penetrating the entire social fabric. The emerging new political figures are reinforcing this feeling of self-development and self-assertion. Soro Kigbafori Guillaume, Charles Blé Goudé and Karamoko Yayoro are the new success figures. Many young people are making their way into politics alongside

several football players who have settled in the wastelands of Abidjan and other cities in the countryside.

The youth have many integration options: business creation or enrolling as a member of a political leader support club or a political party, a militia or Rebellion member and, in the case of educated youth, enrolling as an activist of the *Fédération Etudiante et Scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI)*; each of the Rebellion and "Senate" youth wants to become a Ouattara Issiaka nicknamed "Wattao", an adulated rebel chief admired by the youth. The dream of almost all FESCI members¹⁰ is to follow similar path as most of their elders who now hold influential positions on the Ivorian political stage. The life story of their elders is quite revealing from this perspective. From the first FESCI secretary general (Ahipeaud Martial, who later became a teacher and scholar at the Department of History of the University of Bouaké) to the latest official (Serges Koffi), all former unionists of this movement have created organisations with close ties to political leaders or have been directly employed by them. In this connection, Damana Adia Pikas, former N° 2 of FESCI from 1995 to 1998 and current special adviser to FPI president (Affi N'Guessan) in charge of political matters and a Home Ministry official, working as a civil administrator, an assistant to the managing director of Local Decentralisation and Development (DGDDL) hammered out:

The Côte d'Ivoire of to-morrow will be led by the FESCI generation. (...) It's a matter of the Fescist spirit and system and not of individuals.¹¹

All the former union leaders have a life story which directly or indirectly fascinates the youth. According to the youth, these successes are the result of their own personal efforts. Thus,

Contrary to the independence generation, a time of a one-party system and single thought of the day, today while sons bear their fathers' name, they are also and mostly the ones who now reveal their parents, make them known to the public at large.. (...) From a generation of "Daddies' sons", Côte d'Ivoire has shifted to "Sons' daddies". (...) Our generation is a generation of young women and men, who are forging their own destiny and who,

like a river, are making their own bed. A generation of self-made men who does not wait for their choices and tastes to be dictated to them; they know that *No hay camino, se hace camino al andar* / There is no clear path to follow, you have to walk the path and make way (Blé 2009: 50-51).

Juvenile sub-culture (re)production is a reflection of self-destructive, self-reproducing and self-reinventing body policies in a conflicting environment with an ever-changing accumulation market. Bodies appear as a field where consensual and sometimes conflicting logics criss-cross. The resulting divergences turn those bodies into a battlefield, an arena in which young people are fighting each other and against the elders. The space created is thus used as a tool for thought and action as well as control and domination (Lefebvre 2000:35). It is also a body producing place. This new "envelop" becomes a tool for building new identities that are likely to facilitate integration into new spaces. These new lives operate as inter-generational moderating factors. One is witnessing body mobility in space.

Turned into a Foucauldian bio power, the youth body is the seat of delivery power. This power should be understood to mean the ability, in the face of constraint and domination logics, to transform one's body into a socio-economic capital. This capital is transferred to places where indeed the capacities to tilt towards the youth part or all of one's identity-building can be demonstrated. The struggle for power conquest abolishes moral and educational limits and opts instead for body techniques by learning specific and, even, violent practices. The individual reinvents himself/herself by giving a new meaning to the use of his/her body and, hence, of reproduction techniques as a whole (Mauss 1950:383). The body is also a mediating vehicle for integration, success and fame values. Youth movements across different socio-cultural contexts is part of a vast body techniques "project" which aggregates several imagi-nations embedded in often conflicting social-economic logics.

High Tech Generation

The current generation of SDSs members is a cross section of the Ivorian youth as a whole. An increasing number of them own a cell phone, communicate through

the Web, CDs and DVDs. More recently, Ipods have become part of SDSs' practices. These devices are used as vehicles for broadcasting ideologies and have given birth to new practices, notably in creating new communication codes. A new way of communicating which is not respectful of traditional writing standards has come into being through texting, "Bips" and "MMS".

This language infringement is a creation in Michel de Certeau's sense (1990) since the actors or these young people have invented a new use not provided for in the cell phone operators' project. This diversion of use hinges on the flexibility of a concise writing mode which, contrary to Desjeux's argument (2005), is not that simple. The writing named *texto* is all the more complex, as it reflects the emergence of new juvenile identities in a technology-saturated consumer society. The appropriation inroads made through texting, Bluetooth and Bip are the forewarning signs of new ways of reappropriating these new objects that participate in the creation of youth-type lifestyle.

The Informal Persists

All the measures taken to end CD and DVD sales in these spaces notably their matrix, the "Sorbonne", failed. To some extent, the installation and development of informal transactions in the trade, cultural and pharmaceutical sectors have been facilitated by these spaces. Medication and pirated music CDs are on display for sale side by side. Worse still, everyone goes shopping in those places: the police, gendarmes, the military, priests, nuns, pastors, civil servants, the jobless, pupils, students, senior citizens, etc. Cyber crimes are encouraged through acts of CD piracy. Between May and June, 2009, there was this case of "A secretary who was sleeping with her boss in the Plateau district" which, once again, prompted debate on piracy at the "Sorbonne". A porno video of about 15 minutes featuring a woman and her head of department' hit newspaper headlines in Côte d'Ivoire, and the CD was on sale at the "Sorbonne" for CFAF 1000 or was accessible via Bluetooth on cell phones at a cost of CFAF 500. The scandal was devastating and made the population uncomfortable, as they felt compassion for the woman whose face could be seen on the footage and not that of her part-

ner. In order to end the spiralling distribution of the video, the police carried out a sting operation at the "Sorbonne" to destroy the embarrassing CDs. But as always, this video continues to be sold at the "Sorbonne"; informal activity in its multiple forms is thus encouraged by this space which also resists conventional economy by evading all controls.

The development of informal sector is also facilitated through the exploitation of the spaces hosting SDSs. Their illegal settling on private and state-owned spaces is also cause for dispute with the municipal authorities of the places where SDSs carry on their activities. Some crises were also linked to the commercial activities taking place there. Public space is acquired through the imposition of trademarks and counter trademarks followed by appropriation; public space is thus no longer a shared space because stakes are involved; it becomes then more of a territory to be conquered or defended.

The way the "Sorbonne" occupies and conserves the space where "Sorbonnards" and "Sorbonnians" carry on activities resulted in some power tests between the "Sorbonne", the Plateau Municipality and the Ivorian Copyrights Office (BURIDA). The wasteland where the TPCA conference participants¹² meet is disputed with two entities: an economic agent and the municipality. Between June and July 2004, a dispute erupted between conference participants and this economic agent resulting in the destruction of the building being constructed on this space.

The mode of space acquisition and conservation is indicative of a redefinition of street uses by the actors. These are territories whose appropriation, control and defence constitute socio-political stakes. They are also highly reactive and mobilising spaces in which forms of approval or protest can erupt. The latent or violent clashes linked to the management of SDS spaces are part of the general difficulties posed by urban space management in Côte d'Ivoire. Very strong pressures are exerted on urban real estate followed by extreme land speculation; yet, not so long ago, land was a non-transferable goods. Housing projects for civil servants, private sector employees or simply private ones soon turn urban space into a Gruyere cheese at the mercy of greedy new urbanites caught in the vertigo of an ill-controlled development.

Besides, the incursion of discursive sex practices reveals a close link between politics and sex. In *sex city*, politics gives access to economic resources, which in turn pave the way for sexual resources; in short, fill the stomach and access the groin. The link between sex and political power is undeniable (Toulabor 1992). "Indeed, pleasure and power are not mutually neutralising; they do not turn against each other; they run after each other, overlap and restart. They interweave through complex and positive, exciting and incentive mechanisms" (Foucault 1976:66-67).

Street Dialogue Spaces, an Alternative Exchange Mechanism

SDSs are alternative means of communication between the people and the authorities but also between the populations themselves. The debates initiated in these spaces at times forces leaders to express their positions on those issues. They act here as polling stations established not only to sound or rather "listen" to the street but mostly to provide an answer to the questions and fears of an audience under various influences. The challenge is to test one's opinion on unfolding events (Champagne 1990:215). The populations encourage exchanges in order to have good visibility and perfect legibility of current political affairs. This is a sort of "bottom up" politics that they are instigating. The individual, notably a youngster originating from a popular suburb, can through those spaces, speak directly or indirectly to the authorities who were inaccessible by their origins and functions.

On the other hand, SDSs allow citizens to exchange among themselves on matters of the city state. Despite the threat of a single thought pattern in these spaces and their replication in different blocs, the truth is that SDSs operate as windows through which individuals can express themselves in the public space. But in the face of political censoring, rumour mongering offers the population an opportunity to exchange information and powers on the ruling power. The emergence and propagation of rumours create a game space to challenge the ruling order and contribute to the strategies deployed by social actors for adjusting forms of expressions of claims and discontent. The SDSs phenomenon is one of these spontaneous and popular modes of intervention in politics in Côte d'Ivoire and some

African countries. Information comes to plug a need for information and training (Nyamnjoh 2005:218).

Conclusion

At the initiative of the youth, SDSs appeared in Côte d'Ivoire in 1980, in the context of a socio-economic crisis. Appearing initially in a general format as the "Sorbonne", it today operates as three different blocs. SDSs have interconnections with political spheres. As a result, the intrigues taking place in those spheres are taken over by the streets. "Agoras and Parliaments" bring together young people with close ties to the ruling party, the FPI. The "Grins" identify with the RDR's message while the "Senate" subscribes to the Rebellion's ideology.

Integrated in the communication mechanism of parties and political organisations to which they have ties, SDSs contribute to the building and activity of public space, in general, and political sphere in particular. They participate in the propagation of the political ideologies of the parties they support. They open their spaces for the organisation of public meetings or debates and jointly prepare speeches with politicians while moving from one space to another "campaigning" for their candidates.

SDSs operate as alternative means of communication with the social fabric as a whole. By their practice of violence, NICT re-appropriation, strategies implemented to facilitate their integration in the job market, based on their political positioning and building of new identities, SDSs represent alternative places of expression. Behind the wall of occasional deviant behaviours, new forms of political participation, a different world vision filled with technological applications are being foreshadowed. Politics is an instrument, a means of social positioning (Tessy 1992:259, Coulibaly 2002) in a public space where mobility is restricted for most of the younger population. They are "places of resistance" where there are opportunities for citizens from the poorest social strata or the so called "lower than low" to force exchange with the leaders or so called "top of the top" on the management of the city state's affairs. For, while decision-making is for leaders a game in which they can make mistakes and make "adjustments" later on, remember they are putting here human lives on the line. And

in the vanguard of these new forms of resistance and expression are the youth with new ideas and acting as vehicles for complex new ideologies. As they resist being confined to a socially thinking mould, these ideas have given rise to suspicions.

Notes

1. The cocoa rice paid to the producer decreased from CFAF 400 per kg to CFAF 250 then to CFAF 200 in 1990.
2. He is said to be the n°1 orator at the Abidjan-based "Sorbonne".
3. *Fraternité-Matin* newspaper, N° 13293 dated Tuesday 3rd March, 2009.
4. "Lab work" refers to the practical exercises taught to students.
5. In the Mandinka language *Kôrô* means elder and *Dôgô* younger brother.
6. Means "Temple of Knowledge", a think tank in the Mandinka language.
7. Statement by Mrs Constance Yaï, former Minister and women's rights activist in Côte d'Ivoire.
8. *Le Courrier d'Abidjan* newspaper dated 17th June, 2005.
9. *Fraternité Matin* newspaper n° 93 71 dated 10th January, 1996
10. Name given to FESCI militants.
11. *L'Inter* newspaper, N° 3013 dated Friday 30th May, 2008.
12. Name given to all those who carry on activities on the space: orators, traders, the curious, etc.

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Statism, Youth and Civic Imagination

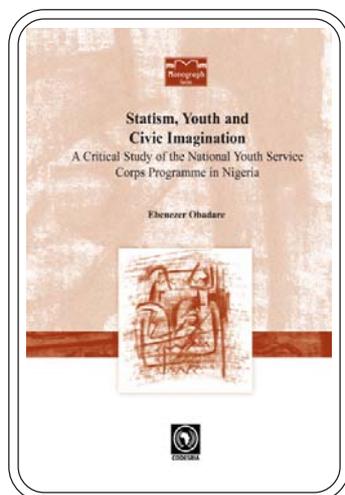
A Critical Study of the National Youth Service Corps Programme in Nigeria

Ebenezer Obadare

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This study explores the service–citizenship nexus in Nigeria, using the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme as an empirical backdrop. It attempts to understand the relationship between civic service and citizenship on the one hand, and it examines the question as to whether youth service promotes a sense of citizenship and patriotism on the other. In the relevant studies on service and sociology, the assumption that service is antecedent to, and impacts positively on citizenship, is taken for granted. The study articulates allegiance to national ideals as an essential foundation for creating and nurturing citizenship.

Children's Lives and Children's Voices: An Exploration of Popular Music's Representation of Children in East Africa

Introduction

Much research on childhood in Africa centers primarily on children as victims and passive participants in larger socio-political problems. Even a general search for literature on childhood in Africa reveals a great number of entries that are limited to health issues, vulnerability to war, malnutrition, or other rights-related issues. It is quite telling that African children are predominantly perceived in the same way the continent and its people are, as pitiful, backward and chaotic. It is an image of children as threatened by disease, hunger, civil war and lack of education. If Africa is a 'dark' continent, then African children have a 'dark' childhood. Without playing down the reality of Africa's and African children's very difficult social, economic, and political challenges, I want to use a slightly different approach to the reality of African childhood and its representation. I want to see how a different kind of representation, based on expressive culture, may allow us to see the complexity of childhood realities in Africa and explore new facets of child and youth studies. I am particularly interested in how childhood in Africa is caught up in the transitions to modernity; a modernity that is itself regarded as the panacea for Africa's transition from 'darkness' to 'light'. The expectation is that when African countries modernize, then children's lives will be improved. I, therefore, want to ponder how modernity could itself be a hindrance to positive experiences for children and youth in Africa.

The challenge that we face in this investigation of childhood representation in Africa is to move from the ideology of children as objects to be represented by others to one where children participate in their own representation. In the same breath, we have to be careful not to fall prey to the tyranny of participation, in which we may assume that having children and youth present in the works we engage constitutes their participation. Participation entails power relations and choices. This is particularly important. Many African cultures emphasize the view of children as inarticulate and incompe-

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tent in socio-cultural matters. Many African children are often 'seen' not 'heard', being spoken for than being regarded as beings with views and opinions to contribute to and about their social worlds. They are, as anthropologist Allison James, says 'silenced spectators' (2007:261) watching their world but not talking about it in any publicly accepted manner. And yet competing with this common perception and regard for children as 'inadequate' members of society are the realities of child soldiers, child headed households, and children engaged in productive economic activities, both in rural and urban locations in Africa. How do we reconcile these two competing scenarios? How does the field of childhood representation look in general and in Africa in particular? What place does popular music as an expressive genre occupy in this terrain of representations of childhood in Africa?

To respond to these questions, while pursuing this new facet of children and youth representations in popular music, I use a symbolic and interpretive approach to analyze songs as symbols and as processes of performance through which musicians and their listeners assign meanings to their experiences and address fundamental questions about children's social lives. I, therefore, see song texts, their performance, and the meanings they carry as important symbols that point to various social and cultural realities of not only children and youth within their realm of production, but also their own communities. To analyze these symbols is thus to access an important cultural repertoire that informs children's lives, perceptions of youth and childhood, and their lived experiences. For purposes of this work, I will use the term childhood or children in reference to individuals below eighteen years of age. This I do, in full recognition

of the reality of a possible conflation of the term children with youth whose age is often both sociological and chronological.

Studies and Representations of Childhood: An Overview

Studies of childhood have, until recently, been mostly confined to developmental issues, especially in psychology or within family studies in sociology. Within anthropology, childhood studies emerged in the 1930s in the US under the Culture and Personality School spearheaded by Margaret Mead (1928, 1935) and Ruth Benedict (1934). In the UK, anthropological work on childhood came in the 1970s through Charlotte Hardman's work in Oxford (1973, 1974). In Africa, childhood studies have predominantly been carried out by Western anthropologists that were spearheaded by the work of Robert Levine and others on childcare (Levine et. al. 1994) and more recently by Alma Gottlieb's work on children and religion in Ivory Coast (2004). More focused studies of childhood identities by anthropologists have represented the voices of children, revealing things that are important to them, even those that adults may consider unimportant or childish (James 2007:264).

Outside anthropology, Childhood studies in Africa have been spearheaded by different research institutes, including the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and the Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and southern Africa (OSSREA) in which scholars from various disciplines have come together to conduct studies that have challenged Western notions of childhood that are based on chronological age rather than social roles. In his work on children working in Zimbabwe, for instance, Victor Muzvidziwa challenges the categories of child labour that are shrouded in issues of rights and illegality and asserts that children should be regarded as workers who are positive contributors to the household income and survival, irrespective of their chronological age (2000). He shows that unlike Western categorizations

of children that are based on chronological age, many children in Zimbabwe work as a means of survival for themselves and their siblings especially in households that have single or no parents. Pamela Reynolds' work in Zimbabwe also shows the role played by children in the liberation war as well as in religious matters (1995). Focusing on children and youth in contexts of conflict, Ibrahim Abdullah shows how youth culture that was anti-establishment emerged in Sierra Leone by appropriating a revolutionary language of university students to contest political power (1997, 1998, 2006). Despite this growing interest in childhood studies within and outside anthropology, there is a dearth of scholarship on how children's lives, aspirations, and realities are represented in popular music in Africa.

The realities surrounding children's inability to freely and easily enter the public realm of self-representation complicates attempts to have any representations of childhood. This is primarily due to the complexity and politics of representation, whether of children or any other groups and individuals. Cultural critic Ella Shohat has rightly stated that any representation 'must be analyzed, not only in terms of who represents, but also in terms of who is being represented for what purpose, at which historical moment, for which location, using which strategies, and in what tone of address' (1995:173). Such post-modernist critiques of grand narratives in ethnographies as well as the suspicions surrounding textual representation of lived realities calls for self-reflexive approaches to any socio-cultural representation(s). Acknowledging these challenges of representing others, and even self, I also believe with James and Prout that children are articulate social actors who have much to say about the world (James and Prout 1990) and can, and do, articulate themselves in various ways at different times. What follows from this realization is the need to pay more attention to avenues through which children find a voice to articulate these realities and experiences. I argue that one such avenue is music and especially popular music, which has recently become quite prevalent in East Africa with the advent of Hip-hop. This music has, through various socio-economic changes, become increasingly identified with youth and children.

Conditions created by the instability of the nation-state following various global

economic and political changes have been a blessing in disguise for many youth in East Africa. Such changes have led to the emergence of a Hip-hop culture based on local and global sensibilities that in turn create certain political and economic opportunities for the youth. The youth have been able to insert themselves into the local and global spheres that shape national and regional political and cultural structures and destinies, by using music as a platform for self-expression and social critique. As a result, numerous opportunities availed to many youth in East Africa through Hip-hop have enabled a number of them to redefine their social identities while expanding their economic opportunities.

When Hip-hop music emerged in urban locations in East Africa in the mid 1990s, it was in response to material conditions of joblessness, decline in living conditions, and massive urbanization with its attendant problems. Many youth across social and ethnic divides were facing these declining living conditions, many of them having been born in the cities to parents who emigrated from rural areas as agriculture failed to provide a stable source of livelihood. Attracted to cities by the lure of modern life, these new immigrants saw their living standards continue to decline.

In the late 80s and early 90s Hip-hop became one medium through which to make sense of and respond to these conditions of extreme poverty and political quagmire. It provided a much-needed voice and public presence to many youth facing unemployment and political powerlessness. From its direct links to rap music in urban Black America to its localized versions, Hip-hop music traversed the public sphere hitherto occupied by politicians, scholars and other opinion shapers, generating not only enormous popularity among young people, but also stepping into an expanding vacuum of social, political and economic commentary (Ntarangwi 2009). Hip-hop took on another role, becoming part of the emerging global take-over of the local resources that contribute to the formation of youth identity and their creative expressions. This take-over was predicated on an overwhelming presence of Western (predominantly American) popular cultural material and expression mediated by, among others, television, the Internet, digital music, telephony and video games that aggres-

sively compete with and subdue local cultural expressions. It was also predicated upon an already existing Western cultural dominance perpetuated by historical structures.

The emergence of Hip-hop in East Africa was influenced by the presence of Western popular culture that intensified in the 1980s through the 1990s, as well as by certain political structures propelled by colonial and neo-colonial forces and socio-economic changes that followed Structural Adjustment Programs. These political and socio-economic realities precipitated the culture of expression realized today in Hip-hop. Embedded in this structural reality, however, is a culture and value system that has continued to evaluate Western modernities over those that are African. Through a colonial system of education, in both public and private secondary schools (where many East African youth are socialized), for instance, Western cultural ideals became idolized, a foundation for cultural expression into the post-colonial period (Ntarangwi 2003b).

It is due to this popularity of Hip-hop among youth and children and their direct participation in it that has led me to explore children's voice and childhood representations in popular music. In this way 'giving voice to children is not simply or only about letting children speak; it is about exploring the unique contribution to our understanding of our theorizing about the social world that children's perspectives can provide' (James 2007:262) and the media that they choose or have access to in such representation. I am primarily interested in how narratives contained in popular music in East Africa represent childhood in East Africa in ways that give voice to otherwise 'voiceless' children and, by extension, how such representation confronts and reflects changes in the socio-cultural and political terrain.

Popular music, especially Hip-hop, has become a medium through which youth and childhood is represented in two ways: first, through its lyrics, artistes are able to articulate critical issues on behalf of children and youth. Second, as a platform that children and youth can and have used to express their creative abilities in ways that were not available to them only a few decades ago. To date, many Hip-hop groups in East Africa comprise of children and youth, some of who are below

twelve years. In Tanzania, for instance, the group Xplastaz (based in Arusha) is made up of siblings who include Diana Rutta (Dineh) and Steven Rutta (Steve) who joined the group in 1997 when they were just eleven and nine years old, respectively. In Kenya, the group Ukooflani Mau Mau (based in Nairobi), which is a conglomeration of many music groups, nurtured and mentored a group of thirty children and youth from Mathare and Dandora, some of whom formed two Hip-hop groups—Eastlandos and Wafalme. Today (2009), these artists are between 10 and 15 years of age. Clearly, children are finding avenues of representation through popular music.

A number of reasons explain this phenomenon: First is the sheer expansion and popularity of Hip-hop music, due to the transformed nature of music-making. Nowadays, one requires minimal capital investment to record a song or songs. With the current technology that allows one to use generic sounds as background music as well as the ease with which one can record a song on CD, many young people are able to make music much more cheaply and fast than it was in the past. Second, Hip-hop music, and especially rap, does not require much singing expertise, as long as one can develop rhyme and rhythm. This may explain the flooding of the East African urban scene with new Hip-hop music and musicians every month. Sadly, these artistes often disappear as quickly as they appear. All in all popular music has opened up spaces for children and youth to not only represent their own realities, but also to be much more engaged in the representation done of them by others.

Popular Music and Social Realities in East Africa

For decades, social scientists, especially anthropologists and ethnomusicologists, have acknowledged the existence of a strong link between music and culture. Generally, music has also been used as a source of ethnographic data, leading to a better understanding of a society (cf. Askew 2002; Cooper 1982; Firth 1987; Ntarangwi 2003a; Perullo 2005) and as an expression of discontent with existing social and political structures (Berliner 1993; Eyerman and Jamison 1998; Hebdige 1975; Pratt 1990). More specifically, research on popular music in East Africa has also shown that music is an ideal tool

through which to assess a variety of cultural realities of a given community or society. It has been regarded as a way of reasserting an erewhile African identity (Samper 2004), as a means of negotiating modernity (Nyairo and Ogude 2003), and as a reflection of everyday socio-cultural youth realities (Lemelle 2006; Ntarangwi 2007). Some scholars have specifically looked at how gendered identity is mobilized through popular music (Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2002; Ntarangwi 2003; Mwangi 2004) while others have explored, in general terms, how national politics and imaginations of statehood are constructed or mobilized through popular music (Askew 2002; Wekesa 2004).

Specifically focusing on Hip-hop, scholars have shown how music is very much linked to the politics of identity among youth in East Africa. Ssewakiryanga's (1999) work analyzes the emerging youth culture in Uganda where American popular music is an important framework from which local Hip-hop culture developed. He argues that while this music may have important contributions to the local Hip-hop scene, it becomes localized through a process of reinterpretation and redeployment. Perullo's (2005) work in Tanzania looks at how rap music confronts stereotypes about young people by using politically and socially relevant lyrics to reach a broader listening audience, while Samper's (2004) work on rap in Kenya shows that, rather than mere copycats of American Hip-hop music, youth use traditions of revolution associated with the anti-colonial movements such as the Mau Mau to respond to post-colonial realities of cultural colonization. It is clear that popular music in the form of Hip-hop has become an important avenue for children and youth in East Africa to represent themselves and their realities or dreams. Further, many organizations working in the area of socio-cultural change have noticed the role played by music and sought to push various social messages to the youth through music.

South Africa's popular music star, Zola (Bongi Dlamini), for instance, was appointed Goodwill Ambassador for Eastern and southern Africa by UNICEF. His ability to connect and capture the attention of youth and children through his music precipitated this appointment. On his first tour to Kenya in early March of 2007, he visited a primary school in Kiambu (Central Kenya) that has been

ravaged by violence against children. During the school visit Zola was reduced to tears when children from the school accounted their encounters and experiences of violence. It is quite telling that the children used the medium of music to articulate their pain and despair, saying as Chinyama and Mwabe (2007) report that 'No one cares for us, we are raped, sodomized and destroyed by people who should be protecting us; We don't know what the future holds for us, only God knows.'

The fact that these atrocities are perpetrated by people who 'should be protecting' the children, convinces them that 'no one cares.' In 2005, a nine-year-old girl was raped and killed on her way from the school and, in 2006, eight girls and four boys were sexually abused on their way from school (Chinyama and Mwabe 2007). The fact that little was done to punish the perpetrators traumatized the students and instilled fear in the community. It is possible that children hardly receive the necessary responses from relevant parties because, as children, they do not have the power to demand attention from the public. This is why it is interesting to see that their readily available medium through which to express their views, experiences, and opinions is music. It is also not coincidental that Zola himself grew up in the harsh Soweto slum environment and turned to music as a way of articulating his views on social issues. The centrality of music as an important tool for representing childhood experiences is here unquestionable.

Representing Modernity and Tradition in Childhood Experiences

Besides becoming a platform for children and youth agency in East Africa, music has also slowly emerged as a medium through which to symbolically debate the representation of African cultures within a dialogic structure, brought about by the interaction between modernity and tradition. Many Africans today struggle with the dialogic structure within which their cultural practices and attitudes develop. On the one hand, African culture has been denigrated to a relic of the past and often considered a hindrance to modernity as expressed through *Maendeleo* (development). On the other, there is a growing move to reclaim a proud heritage of an ideal African cultural past that seeks to

establish a certain cultural rootedness in the face of global cultural and politico-economic hegemony. The latter is especially articulated by Thabo Mbeki's notion of African Renaissance.¹

Political and cultural globalization that was mobilized by imperial and colonial expansion prior to, and later in, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, paved way for contemporary globalization now centered around economics and technology. In much of East Africa, this has become an ongoing process of cultural expression that takes on different forms and acquires different identities especially as a consequence of the neo-liberal economic project. The process has in turn opened local markets up to foreign (mostly Western) cultural products such as movies, music, dress and other opportunities for cultural exchange (or dominance) through satellite television, FM radio, email, Internet, cell phones, and other forms of cultural expression. The mixed opportunities availed by globalization has led to insecurity and reclusion as certain individuals and communities reinvent their cultural identities in response to the homogeneity brought by globalization. Others have taken on the opportunities availed by globalization to positively enhance themselves socially and economically.

Tanzania's popular music artiste commonly known as Professor Jay (Joseph Haule) presents the dialogism brought by a pull between tradition and modernity in a song titled *Taifa la Kesho* (Tomorrow's Nation) in which he becomes the voice of children, castigating the neglect, apathy, and moral decadence facing Africa's children. He starts by stating:

I am pained when I see children
vending water

Every day you say that education is
their investment

Education is a right for every child

The government has declared free
primary education

Imagine children paying to ride
commuter buses

Their parents have abandoned and
sacrificed them.

It is now a truism that formal education has become the most important form of socialization for East Africans in preparing them to successfully integrate into the

modern-state. This is why basic education has been recognized as a basic right for all children in East Africa. To this end, the East African governments have instituted free primary education programs, but, as Professor Jay shows, the program has not benefited all. Professor Jay's commentary here on education and children paying to ride public transportation reveals the challenges of education in a poor nation like Tanzania. When the then president, Benjamin Mkapa reintroduced compulsory free primary education, the existing infrastructure could not cope with increased enrolment (Otieno 2002). Therefore, despite the country's declared free education programme not all children attend school, and some engage in income generating activities such as vending water. With high numbers of pupils enrolled in primary school, and few opportunities to proceed through secondary school where only about 9 per cent of all primary school children go on to secondary school (Nkosi 2005), a large number of youth will end up in poor social conditions because of the role of education in social mobility.

Childhood representation in East Africa is also challenged by the ambiguity created by a desire to see children in a traditional sense that regards them only as invalids who have to be represented in all facets of life by adults and by the reality of living in a fast-changing socio-cultural terrain. This romantic cultural representation of African traditions of childhood clashes conceptually with the reality of the actual lives community members live in a modern nation-state that is driven by Western modes of modernity. Here is how Professor Jay articulates this reality:

Who should have a seat in public
transportation, the young or old?

I think it's the child so (s)he can bring
forth others

You bring up old traditions such as
those stating the old should eat steak

While children eat the heads and
hooves so that you may rejoice.

It is very common for younger people to give up seats in public transportation to those older than them as a form of respect. Children, it is expected, can withstand the challenges of standing in a moving vehicle and that they have many more years to ride public transportation, and so, they need to show deference to adults. Yet,

what Professor Jay presents in this song is a cultural dilemma. Public transportation signifies the modern amenities of mobility, moving from one's locality to another, and especially to urban areas. But in the midst of engaging with this modernity, the people also want to maintain certain traditional ideologies and practices that favour adults over children who the song refers to as 'leaders of tomorrow.' How can modernity be upheld while holding on to traditional ideas and practices that do not allow for such forward movement? This seems to be the question Professor Jay is indirectly asking here which challenges the audience to change such behaviour when he brings in children to sing the chorus that says, 'sisters, mothers, brothers, have mercy on me, brothers, fathers, mothers, have mercy on me.'

Quite clearly Professor Jay recognizes that children's identity is tied to their relationships with others in the society. This explains the appeal made directly to family members from whom the children ask for mercy even though such concerns cannot be limited to filial relations. By couching their appeal in the context of mercy, the children are targeting the emotive and 'soft' side of the society. It pre-emptly the existence of ill treatment on the children. The children are suffering and if the community truly cares about them, then it would show mercy on them. This appeal is important when seen in relation to how adults have responded to an invitation to help children. Realizing their unwillingness to assist children, Professor Jay presents his appeal in a way that compels adults to see the importance of helping children. He turns to every adult and asks them to recognize the interconnectedness between childhood and adulthood as well as the continuity of the nation-state. He says:

Those who are adults now were once
children

But when I ask them to help children
they turn away

Yet they daily sing that children are
the leaders of tomorrow

We are losing many of these children
and others are continually suffering

Oh God almighty please help these
angels.

The irony of stated ideals and practical realities regarding children is quite evident here. As it shows, many people say

that children are tomorrow's leaders but refuse to assist them when requested. In their song about youth, Eastlandos, comprised of Ciku (Mary Wanjiku, 14), Nash (Nahashon Ng'ang'a, 15), Sam (Samantha Nyokabi, 14) and Mary (Mary Nzomo, 13), challenge this notion of children as tomorrow's leaders when they state:

Who said that we are tomorrow's leaders?

We are today's leaders!

The young generation has emerged from the ghetto and is bringing you education.

In this song, Eastlandos show that youth in Kenya may not be interested in waiting for years to take up leadership because of their age. Indeed, the four artists continue to perform music while maintaining their goals of acquiring an education. Wherever they make money from their music performance, they first pay their school fees, and as a result convince their parents of the value of music. Their parents then allow them to continue performing music while in school.²

As East African communities wrestle with a type of modernity that challenges their cultural practices, a number of new ideologies emerge. Composed in the first years of the twenty first century when there were many socio-political and economic changes in East Africa to match the emerging modernity, Professor Jay's *Taifa la Kesho* reveals once again the prevailing and challenging social issues of the day. One of those issues affecting children directly is that of spanking. Spanking children as a form of punishment is not only common in much of East Africa, it is also expected and accepted. Yet, as these communities change, they are confronted with new ideas regarding spanking. This is an issue that Professor Jay addresses quite forcefully, saying:

It's not necessary to spank a child when (s)he is wrong

This is where I see parents have gone astray

Does spanking teach or hurt children?

That is a fundamental question you need to ask

Because too much spanking makes children stubborn

I do not mean you should pamper the child.

No, first (s)he should go to school, after which (s)he can play.

It has taken many communities in East Africa a while before they could consider spanking of children as a practice that needs to be re-evaluated and even abandoned altogether. Even though formal schooling came to East Africa as part of Western modernity, spanking became accepted as a form of punishment that endured for a long time. In Kenya it took government intervention through the Legal Notice 56/2001 to ban the use of corporal punishment as a method of disciplining students in school. Yet, a 2002 survey conducted by Population Communication Africa (PCA) showed that out of 1, 140 students surveyed, 52.6 per cent reported being caned (Lloyd 2002). In Uganda, Bishop Elisha Kyamugambi of the Ankole Diocese asked the government to revisit the law barring corporal punishment for children, arguing that it instills discipline (Basiime 2002). So far, corporal punishment is still lawful in Tanzania and leaves open the process through which it can be opposed or even abandoned. It is not that Professor Jay is opposed to corporal punishment in its entirety, but to that used 'unnecessarily' on school children and actually suggests harsh punishment for such crimes as rape. In a quick turn-around from condemning corporal punishment in school, Professor Jay calls for the harshest penalty for sex offenders, especially those who defile children. He argues that:

It would be good for the public to assist the courts

Rather than get off the boat when it's sinking

I am shocked that an old man with grey hair can rape a child

I advise the courts to double the punishment on such men

Hang them or give them a life sentence, it is justified

I am amazed humans are greedier than hyenas

How can they rape a two-year-old child?

These criminals don't deserve to live they should be hanged.

Kenya's nominated Member of Parliament Njoki Ndung'u (2003-2007) proposed a motion that would quite literally reflect Professor Jay's call for harsh punishment on rapists. In the motion, Ndung'u pro-

posed that convicted rapists be castrated. The motion was passed unanimously but with amendments that rejected the call for castration. The motion, which became the Sexual Offences Act 2006 states in part that 'A person who commits an offence of defilement with a child aged eleven years or less shall upon conviction be sentenced to imprisonment for life' (Government of Kenya 2006). This law and Professor Jay's song texts reflect the extent to which violence on children in many East African communities has escalated as children make transitions to new politico-economic and social realities. Sociologists have examined the link between crime trends and social change and shown that crime rates increase as society goes through socio-economic challenges (see, for instance, Arthur 1992). These social changes affect children as well. Professor Jay shows that when children are neglected, they turn to criminal activities. He says in the same song that:

Why do you give our children such a hard time?

Now see how this five-year-old child is already sniffing glue

He has become distressed and turned into a pickpocket

We do not even value education any more

Is this the kind of nation you want?

I am not sure if you recognize the consequences of this reality

At night these children will pick up guns and come after you.

Without proper socialization children will turn to other forms of socialization including those mediated through criminal activities. Sniffing glue, pickpocketing, and criminal activities are very much tied to urban youth, many of whom live on the streets. Research on street children in East Africa reveals that when family income decreases, members are forced to put pressure on children to work in order to support the family (Kapoka 2000; Kilbride, Suda and Njeru 2000; Lorraine and Barrett 2001). These are the realities that Professor Jay highlights in this song. Yet, to consider some of these 'anti-establishment' activities as only tied to social and economic challenges is to ignore the agency of youth and children as individuals who through various forms of marginalisation and exclusion from the state, community, and even filial privileges, strategically and

forcefully, insert themselves in these public spaces. Many children and youth caught up in conflict and war, for instance, have often been drafted forcefully but there are others who find participation in conflict as avenues through which to become useful members of an otherwise excluded social group. In the case of children in northern Uganda, however, the neglect and exclusion shown by the government of Yoweri Museveni begets a more complex analysis of the attendant historicity and ethnic dimension.

Giving Voice to the Voiceless: The Case of Children in northern Uganda

They have been known as 'night Commuters' following various documentaries in Western media, but the children of SOUTHERN Uganda are more than commuters. They have been both victims and villains of the civil war that has primarily pitted the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) and the Uganda government. The historicity of this experience is quite intriguing and sheds light on the complexity of the current conflict. During Obote's reign in the 1980s, the majority of the national army soldiers were Acholi who together with the Langi (Obote's ethnic group) formed a formidable force against insurgency coming from the south, led by Yoweri Museveni and the National Resistance Army (NRA). The Acholi/Langi coalition did not last long. After Tito Okello and Basilio Okello, two Acholi senior officers in the army, were bypassed in the appointment of Uganda's Commander-in-Chief, there was in-fighting in the army that pitted the Acholi against the Langi. The Acholi defeated the Langi and established Tito Okello as president. Tito Okello's reign was, however, short-lived. The NRA defeated Okello's army and Museveni was sworn in as president in January 1986 (Allen 1991). This succession of events led to regional groupings which saw former Acholi soldiers and others aspiring for political leadership, regroup in opposition to the Museveni government. The ethnic animosity that ensued between the Acholi and their counterparts in the South, primarily the politically-powerful Baganda has had an important role in the stretched-out conflict.

In 1987, the self-elected spiritual leader of the Acholi in Uganda, Alice Auma (later known as Alice Lakwena when she took on the name of the spirit that possessed her) saw her campaign to liberate the Acholi of northern Uganda militarily crum-

ble in the hands of the NRA. Alice had in 1986 initiated a movement for the Acholi to reverse the NRA political might but failed. Joseph Kony's LRA came in almost as a continuation of the struggle initiated by Alice (Behrend 1999) but instead of liberation, the LRA tormented and traumatized the Acholi for years. Joseph Kony's army has survived through brute force, abducting children and forcing boys to become soldiers while girls are sexually abused and turned into servants or wives of the soldiers. This went on for over two decades until there was international pressure to highlight and stop the plight of the people of northern Uganda, many of them children. In 2001, the US Patriotic Act declared the LRA a terrorist organization; in 2004, the US Congress passed the northern Uganda Crisis Response Act; and in 2005, the International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Joseph Kony and four of his top commanders (www.invinciblechildren.com). All this attention helped sensitize many Westerners of the plight of northern Uganda but the most effective program came through three young Americans—Jason Russell, Bobby Bailey, and Laren Poole—who went to Uganda in search of some 'cool' pictures and came back with a story. Their trip was visually recorded and later turned into *The Invincible Children: Rough Cut*, a movie that changed many American youth's response to children in northern Uganda. The movie was packaged in a medium that appeals to youth, with fast music, moving captions on screen, and focusing on school. Through this movie, a movement emerged that led to partnerships between schools in the US and Uganda, where funds were raised to aid in the everyday needs of Ugandan children. These responses by youth in aid to other youth brought a new way of cross-cultural interactions, connecting outsiders with locals.

Locally in Uganda, a group of musicians also came together to respond to the silence that shrouded the atrocities facing northern Uganda. This silence especially increased when many families in northern Uganda were moved to internally Displaced People's camps where they live in squalor. In a song titled 'No More Virgins in Gulu' the artistes—Halima Namakula, Butcherman, and Ngoni Group—contextualize their representation within the prevailing politics in Uganda. The group uses President Museveni's visit to Gulu in 2005 to specifically fore-

ground their story. The song narrates the difficult circumstances in which people in northern Uganda live. It is quite instructive that the song is titled 'no more virgins.' Reference to virgins symbolically denotes purity and innocence that many associate with children and childhood. Yet, all this has been taken away from the children of northern Uganda literally as their fellow Ugandans and government watch. In the chorus, the song indicts the neglect that the Museveni government has shown to the people of northern Uganda who now live in Gulu. They sing:

Dear Museveni we are happy, to receive you here in Gulu

The education is poor, communication is poor

There is (sic) no more virgin in Gulu, they were all raped by Kony

The situation is poor, but all the same we are happy.

The use of the phrase 'but all the same we are happy' is to show that children and people of Gulu have been so neglected that hardships make them 'happy' rather than bitter. How can people facing such hardships be happy? These artistes are showing the sarcasm that comes from a condition where people realize that the government may not really care about their welfare. Why else would they be neglected for two decades unless they were living in conditions that make them happy?

Uganda's geographic regions reflect ethnic boundaries with the Acholi primarily occupying northern Uganda. Their neglect is not only regional but also ethnic. The perception in Uganda is that the southerners are the ones who have ruled Uganda for the longest, with the Buganda Kingdom in pre-colonial times and Museveni who is from the south having been president since 1986. This ethnic neglect may explain why the song goes on to say that the musicians are wondering why Ugandans are so saddened by international catastrophes, like the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York in 2001, yet not bothered by the death and suffering of their fellow Ugandans in the north. The artistes ask, 'is the blood of Americans so special different from ours? Is their blood blue and ours red?' The musicians then give an example of how all the churches in Uganda prayed for the US after the September 11, 2001 attacks but they didn't pray for Gulu.

When the children of Gulu sing that they are happy despite the breakdown of infrastructure, they are responding to this cold treatment they receive from their fellow Ugandans and the government. The people in Gulu have lost all hope as the artistes explain when they say that, 'Even when they say that they are happy to see President Museveni; they sing it with their lips, but their hearts are bleeding.'

The song then urges Ugandans to pray for the people of Gulu, for the hard and sad life that they have endured for so long. They say that every day is a day of running, running in search of safety, unlike people living in the other regions of Uganda where there is peace. The song reminds the audience of the atrocities that have been endured by the people of Gulu. Even if there has been truce and not much fighting going on in NORTHERN Uganda recently, the people, and especially the children have to live with the emotional and physical scars of war. Many of them had their noses, ears, breasts and limbs cut off for refusing to join or support the LRA. They carry those physical scars that also extend to emotional and psychological levels. Even with reduced atrocities towards the people in Gulu, their living conditions in the camps have been terrible. This is why the song continues to narrate the challenges of living in the camps. The artistes say:

War is a very nasty experience

People suffer and sleep in Internally Displaced Peoples Camps

Parents share a single room with their six children

When the parents are having sex in the night

The children see or hear everything that is going on.

War has dehumanized and left them naked, robbed them of privacy and culture

Congestion in the camps spreads diseases faster

Leading to high infant mortality, and bad general welfare.

The humiliating living conditions at the camps show that there is need for new and deliberate ways of helping people in northern Uganda. The song highlights the shame and loss of culture, this time not due to modernizing, but due to internal warfare. It is clear that, to understand the

role played by popular music in highlighting the plight of children and youth, one has to pay attention both to the content of various songs as well as the socio-cultural realities of the day. In so doing, one can make connections between the lives of children and youth and the challenges they face on one hand, and the representations of such realities on the other.

Conclusions

I have argued here that while representing children and youth in Africa is quite a challenge for lack of ample scholarship, popular music has emerged as an important platform for such representation. Popular music, as a cultural product, reveals a lot about the social structure of the society from which it emanates. Indeed, popular songs and culture in general, are not only about society, they do not just reflect, but are part of the socio-cultural fabric. They articulate and mould life experience while at the same time becoming forms of expressing social reality and aspirations of children and youth in a rapidly changing context. In revealing what I would like to call the deep structure of socio-cultural reality of East African life, music is here able to get into the core of the issues that are not otherwise addressed by those in positions of power that cannot otherwise be said in other fora. In this way, music is a central medium through which social experience is channeled.

In privileging music as a source of ethnographic data and a platform for representing children and youth in East Africa, I am showing that cultural activities and events are often mediated through popular culture and are worth of independent analysis and interpretation. It is therefore my argument that songs can be viewed as 'cultural texts' that hinge on the discursive, representation and contestation of the cultural whole of any community or society. Seeing music as a creative expression of a society's institutions, values, and experiences, I have shown how social issues get played out in music whose structure directly reflects social reality and ideology. Though few scholars have concentrated on the analysis of song texts as cultural texts (and in particular popular music), I have here argued that song texts are important sources of ethnographic data and can be good pointers to East Africa's changing

social structure, especially as it affects children and youth.

Notes

1. See, <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbeki/1998/tm0813.htm> accessed May 12, 2009.² I am indebted to Felix Gicharu (Felo) for this information on Eastlandos.

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Quality Debate in CODESRIA Journals Requires Quality Research

Keynote address presented at the Annual Conference of Editors of CODESRIA Journals on the theme "CODESRIA Journals as Forums for Scholarly Debates Informed by and Relevant to African Realities", Hotel Residence Ndiambour, Dakar, Senegal, 11- 12 November 2009

Introduction

Journals of the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) were created to support social research and knowledge production and consumption in Africa and by Africans, in line with CODESRIA's vision and mission as articulated in its Charter in 1973.

The role of CODESRIA journals, editors, and editorial advisory boards is detailed in CODESRIA's Publications and Dissemination Policy, last updated in 2005 and available in hard copy and from the web. They are expected to promote African scholarship relevant to African predicaments and aspirations. They also help CODESRIA orient the intellectual agenda on the basis of which Africa is studied. I invite us all to reread CODESRIA's 2007-11 strategic plan, anchored on how to promote rethinking of Africa's development. Rethinking requires support for scholarship that deconstructs epistemological fallacies informed by ambitions of dominance that have sustained the caricaturing of African social realities. Such scholarship should legitimize African encounters and forms of knowing and knowledge construction.

What CODESRIA prescribes and expects of its journals is therefore quite clear. Because we are not here simply to rehash and re-enact those prescriptions and expectations, I would like us to dwell on the heart of the future: How to go about fulfilling the CODESRIA vision and mission beyond sterile rhetoric on the need for African scholarship and African voices in the marketplace of ideas. How do we translate our wishes into horses in real terms? For 36 years we have persevered in trying to create space for an alternative world through alternative research into alternative voices by alternative researchers. How will we fulfil CODESRIA's mission through its journals going forward? How alternatively will we ask the ques-

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tions to ensure that we do not simply reproduce conventional wisdom and business as usual in the name of the African Alternative in scholarship and in the journals that communicate that scholarship?

To pave the way for forward-looking thinking at this conference, I'd like us to briefly refresh our minds about the role of CODESRIA publications in general and its journals in particular.

CODESRIA publications have the formidable task of promoting greater visibility and accessibility of African scholarship in and outside Africa. But not just scholarship for the sake of scholarship, rather, scholarship in tune with African values, revelatory of social theory and practice in African contexts, and relevant to the developmental needs of the continent. What is needed is theoretically and methodologically creative and innovative scholarship, not unquestioning or unproblematised adoption and reproduction of conceptual and methodological outfits designed with scant regard for the lived experiences of Africans.

CODESRIA stresses the need for critical rethinking of development and related concepts and conceptualisation of social phenomena, thus emphasising thinking over doing, creative appropriation over mimicry and production over reproduction. The research projects supported by CODESRIA are meant to deliver scholarship that asserts African humanity and creativity while respecting the highest standards of scientific excellence and rigour. In turning to the wider social research community, beyond its immediate membership, the idea is to shop around for excellent scholarship that showcases the

best from and on Africa and that is relevant to her peoples and their needs and aspirations.

There have been, and indeed, continue to be great debates in CODESRIA journals in the form of book reviews, review articles, thematic and special issues and reports on innovative research. We only need to flip through the pages of the *CODESRIA Bulletin*, *Africa Review of Books*, *Africa Development*, *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, *African Sociological Review*, or any other CODESRIA journal to appraise some of these debates. Many of us would recall the Archie Mafeje/Ali Mazrui debate in the pages of the *CODESRIA Bulletin* (see No.3&4 2008), and are of course familiar with the attention and commentary received by Thandika Mkandawire's critical commentary on the intellectual itinerary of Jeffrey Sachs, published in the *Africa Review of Book* of March 2006. However, the quality of debate in CODESRIA journals and other publications depends on the quality of research and thought produced. For the research it sponsors, CODESRIA should provide quality assurance at each stage, from calls for proposals and abstracts, to methodology and writing workshops, fieldwork, and the submission of reports or articles for publication. Even before manuscripts are submitted for peer-review, coordinators of CODESRIA networks and journal editors play an important role in verifying that work rhymes with CODESRIA's strategic orientations, and that authors are sufficiently familiar with local and global debates that relate to African realities, and that their scholarship is cognizant of the complex and nuanced nature of such realities.

This ensures that the peer-review process focuses more on how to enrich manuscripts than on having to eliminate scholarship running counter to the vision and mission which CODESRIA funds and

supports and for which it receives core funding and other support. It is simply naive to presume that because someone looks or passes for African (by accident of phenotype or geography), his or her scholarship and intellectual *habitus* necessarily demonstrates deep understanding or meaningful representations of African realities. Similarly, it is not because someone espouses rhetoric about challenging paradigms that tend to caricature and misrepresent Africa that that person necessarily produces rigorous scholarship to help upset those paradigms.

A danger in preaching to the converted is that critical instincts are blunted by all the alleluias and amens that come in sharing the same basic faith, beliefs and assumptions. While there is a compelling need, both scientifically and politically, to continue to promote African voices articulating African predicaments, CODESRIA should augment attention to the scientific quality and social pertinence of research and scholarship. What is published should be in line with CODESRIA's mission. Every time we publish counter to it, we retard development and also jeopardise CODESRIA. CODESRIA must practice what it preaches. The quality and pertinence of the research questions we ask and encourage will determine the quality and pertinence of intellectual arguments and debates reflected and circulated in CODESRIA's publications and to some extent even in other social science journals on the continent.

Research Questions are Key, Intellectual Arguments Paramount

Much of what passes for scholarship on Africa is conceptually shoddy and highly problematic. Insufficient time and effort are accorded to conceptual and methodological rigour, leaving the impression that almost anything goes, perhaps because one is dealing with Africa. If this is the attitude, it is unfortunate, as Africa needs all the intellectual rigour it can mobilise, because of the sheer magnitude of its predicaments. Paradoxically, some of the shoddy thinking and research comes from people well funded to do serious empirically well substantiated research. CODESRIA and indeed every social scientist that cares for Africa must aggressively and continuously challenge such attitudes and practices.

How well CODESRIA journals fulfil their mission of relevance in scholarship and debate will depend very much on how successful CODESRIA is able to instil a culture of critical research among its members, the networks it supports, and the universities and other partners with which it works. While the editors of CODESRIA journals should expect and even encourage relevant material from scholars outside CODESRIA networks of partners, its journals also need content from within the ranks of the vibrant CODESRIA community of social researchers and scholars. Indeed, donors would be alarmed if CODESRIA had little to show within the pages of its own publications for the resources it deploys yearly for training and research. There must be value for money. The value of CODESRIA publications is in the degree to which they stimulate and satisfy the crave for African world outlooks and epistemological, methodological and empirical work of quality embedded in African realities and thinking.

Research is all about asking the right questions, and scholarly writing about communicating persuasively the results of research. Mahmood Mamdani did both in *Myth of Population Control*, published a year before CODESRIA was founded in 1973. In this work he critically reviewed an American-sponsored survey of birth control practices in a region of India, which concluded that people are poor because they have large families. With a different set of questions, based on the cultural context, Mamdani concluded that people have large families because they are poor. His practice of the art of critical reinterpretation is evident in other works such as *Citizen and Subject*, *Good Muslim Bad Muslim*, *When Victims Become Killers*, and *Saviors and Survivors*, all of which benefited from CODESRIA support either for research or publication or both.

The tradition of critical research and critical writing, to buttress alternative thinking in tune with our African aspirations, is present and needs only to be harnessed in more systematic and sustained ways at CODESRIA. The Council has, for example, contributed to the advancement of research on women and gender, and by women, through various research, training, policy dialogue and publication programmes, including the 1997 landmark book, *Engendering African Social Sciences*, edited by three of Africa's leading

gender scholars: Ayesha Imam, Anima Mama and Fatou Sow.

These two examples show that our gurus have a key role to play, promoting a culture of debate and ensuring the mentorship necessary for young and budding scholars to acquire and excel in that culture. How can we better build on intellectual heritage and strengths, even as we remain critical and alert intellectually, regardless of whether or not the gurus are ours?

Asking the right questions and building science entails carefully and critically situating the object of one's study within existing knowledge by drawing on and feeding back into it in terms of theory, methodology, issues and debates. Researchers need to continually listen to, draw on, interact with and edify the work of peers. They must understand the local context and involve those researched in the production of knowledge about their realities and predicaments. We must resist the syndrome of talking at, talking on, talking past and hardly talking to or talking with the very ordinary Africans we claim our scholarship is about, and for whom we tend to arrogate to ourselves the status of spokespersons. Researchers should see themselves as instruments of society, rather than as all powerful theatre or film directors working with "local actors." We should be like bridges – bridging understandings of realities and power dynamics and linking the past and the present in the making of the future.

These considerations and sensibilities about situation, dialogue and participation should be rule of thumb in research and scholarly writing, and thus in the debates that animate the pages of CODESRIA journals. This challenge, however, is more easily stated than met. Why? Partly because of the vertical and dogmatic power dynamics that characterise knowledge production, a world of local and global interconnecting hierarchies informed, among other things, by race, place, culture, class, status, gender and age. The fate of ideas and research findings, however compelling, often boils down to the race, geography, culture, ethnicity, class, status, gender or age of the researchers involved, as these factors largely determine participation and attitudes at scientific gatherings and in other scholarly processes in the not so democratic marketplaces of ideas. Who here present would not agree that these fac-

tors often weigh in more than the scientific content of material subjected to peer-review? We all know stories of notoriously popular scholars, well situated in terms of these parameters, who impose themselves over and above peer-review mechanisms. They tend to think they are doing you a favour publishing in your journal or, as kings, kingmakers, princes, princesses, dinosaurs, gurus or whatever they choose to call themselves or are called, that the peer-review process does not and should not apply to them.

If these challenges are common to all sciences, they are even more glaring in the social sciences and humanities, where the very object of study – society – changes and redefines itself in ways that nature cannot quite match. This makes theory building in the social sciences and humanities particularly challenging. Given the accentuated prevalence of hierarchies and unequal power relations that play into how social research is conceptualised and implemented, the risk of theoretical and methodological fallacies is great, and so is the likelihood of their being imbibed or internalised uncritically. CODESRIA researchers and journal editors should be sensitive to and sensitised about these issues. They should demonstrate a high degree of consciousness and critical engagement with these factors and the attitudes and assumptions they occasion.

CODESRIA and its journals are particularly well placed to notice and expose the extent to which global intellectual gurus are naked in their imagined clothes, old or new. To excel in this role, the intellectual agenda of CODESRIA journals must stay faithful to its paramount mission of promoting multidisciplinary debate informed by social research which derives from and is relevant to the experience of the African continent and its peoples. In a world of hierarchies, achievement of this mission necessitates institutional policies to encourage social research and debate on various aspects of life and society. Beyond policy, it requires deliberate and diligent attempts to critically question and deconstruct conventional theories, methodologies and research, using the basic assumptions underlying them. Such deconstruction, if consistent and systematic, will raise consciousness about the trappings of Intellectual Bandwagonism, whereby Africans are invited to research or debate themes determined and conceptualised by others, with scant regard for

the problematic nature of the theoretical and methodological frameworks proposed. Intellectual Bandwagonism, shaped by International Intellectual Fashion Designers, with little or no regard for the African condition, remains a serious threat to the development of Africa. CODESRIA journal editors must not fall prey to these tricks and trends. They must be vigilant and make African perspectives and viewpoints central as they receive and process submissions for publication.

Social research is embedded in cultural values. Societies, even in their dynamism, are characterized by major differences in culture, language, demographic structure, experience and expectations. This precludes the use of carbon copy methods which assume that genuine comparability can be achieved by administering the same questions in the same way in all countries or regions involved in a study. Methods of data collection, no matter how appropriate in one context, are not necessarily so in another. Editors of CODESRIA journals, in the interest of meaningful, lively and innovative debates, must privilege and actively encourage originality in thinking and practice, while condemning mimicry and bandwagonism. Autonomy of thought and practice should be stressed.

Autonomy of thought and practice, however, is a challenge when the development of research in Africa has to compete with donors and NGOs chasing after unpaid and underpaid scholars desperate to make ends meet. All together, they preach efficiency and practicality and conspire to conduct mostly ahistorical and atheoretical work which hardly relies on well formulated questions and hypotheses. Because it is usually aimed at resolving precise policy, commercial, social or development problems, it tends to be more concerned with sampling than conceptualisation and more preoccupied with description than analysis. This piecemeal approach does not emphasize integration and continuity. Irrespective of the nature of the social phenomenon under investigation, the final research report is usually confined to statements about amenable but relatively superficial aspects of a complex issue. Such a positivistic or behaviouristic approach often blinds its practitioners to the value assumptions implicit in the formulation of research questions that determine research design. Like uncritical consultants, the researchers in this tradition hardly

bother to redefine the research problem brought to them by governments, industry, NGOs and other purported agents of development, and so their research tends to reinforce the security, privileges and profits of those who pay for it. Clearly, CODESRIA, with a mandate to promote critical scholarship in relation to pressing development imperatives, cannot condone research that continues to caricature substantive issues and gloss over important epistemological concerns. Unfortunately however, shoddy research is not the prerogative of the positivist tradition, as many so-called progressive scholars have contented themselves with qualitative platitudes, rhetoric, and slogans.

Nothing of value comes easily, and this is true of the study of Africa. CODESRIA thus has the challenge and imperative of re-socialising and reappraising researchers and scholars in alternatives that have been forgotten, minimised, ignored and unimagined. This involves calling into question certain basic assumptions, conventional wisdom, academic traditions and research practices which social researchers in Africa have uncritically and often unconsciously internalised, but which remain largely ill adapted to African contexts.

Some scholars have suggested multi-methodological approaches in African research. For example, they question the tendency to make *a priori* distinctions between sociological and anthropological methods and to equate the latter with the study of "primitive," "archaic," or "rural" societies and suggest that every research situation should determine its methods, especially given the fact that rural communities, perceived as "primitive" or "archaic", are not as decipherable as some of the literature and stereotypes would seem to suggest.

I would like to suggest to CODESRIA editors that flexible and diverse methodological buffets offer better prospects than the insensitive insistence that certain methods must go with certain disciplines or types of inquiry. As Cheikh Anta Diop argued perceptively in the early 1960s (ready as he was to pay the price for his stubborn perceptiveness and determination to challenge the marginalisation of African contributions to human creativity and scholarship), nowhere else better than in the study of African societies, can anthropology and sociology combine

their methods and collaborate more effectively. For in Africa where indigenous elements co-exist with western and oriental ones, changes are in process that are yet to be adequately understood with research methods drawn from both disciplines.

It is in the light of these insights that CODESRIA should insist on innovative epistemological and methodological approaches in the research proposals it receives for funding, and in the papers generated by its networks for publication in its journals. Proposals and papers should show evidence of critically engaging, not only the related shoddy scholarship on Africa, but also, and more importantly, African scholarship produced on the continent. The invitation here is not to celebrate that scholarship, but simply to critically and seriously engage it. Simply dismissing or endorsing it through passing references is hardly good enough, and it does not indicate that one has actually taken time to read and understand it. Researchers must be actively involved with research and draw on research findings indicative of the fact that African populations do not live in dichotomies. In other words, meaningful deconstruction and reconstruction of theories and methodologies cannot be articulated in the abstract. It necessarily has to be informed by actual social processes. Systematically ensuring critical engagement with scholarship guarantees good value for resources, as CODESRIA helps the African social research community build on past critical research results to identify knowledge gaps and issues for further research, thereby minimising duplication that is wasteful of human and financial resources and the expectations of academic and policy communities.

The magnitude of intellectual effort and research involved in systematic and meaningful deconstruction and reconstruction of theories and methodologies speaks in favour of CODESRIA's model of funding and promoting networks of researchers rather than individuals. The composition of all networks and editorial boards should reflect its interest in promoting elite, cutting edge, world class research, as well as mentoring younger and bud-

ding scholars to develop a research culture and excel as scholars. A modality should be worked out to institutionalise and systematise collaborative research and publication initiatives and networking between senior and junior researchers beyond the occasional mentorship in its current form. In this way, junior scholars are able to benefit from the experience of seasoned researchers, a type of seniority determined not by age but by quality scholarship and evidence of a track record in critical research informed by Africa and its realities of local and global inter-connecting hierarchies.

Research training workshops should focus more on innovative and critical approaches. They should target junior lecturers teaching methodology courses and become part and parcel of the curriculum in African universities. Other linkages and alliances between CODESRIA and African university spaces should be strategized and strengthened as well. As Bernard Fonlon insisted, writing around the same period as Cheikh Anta Diop, any university that does not teach a student to think critically and in total freedom has taught him or her nothing of genuine worth. CODESRIA has a role in helping to ensure that critical thought.

By Way of Conclusion

In concluding, I would like to recognize the mileage and kilometres covered by CODESRIA journals and other publications in the past 36 years. They have been indispensable in making available African scholarship and supporting and encouraging the problematisation and conceptualisation of African realities. In this address, I have implored you to be more aware and more vigilant and to make our production more critical, more questioning, more challenging, more constructive, and more imbued with the ingenuity of Africa. This takes untiring reminders, constant nurturing, and strategic efforts by all, considering the goliath structures dictating knowledge production globally.

It is true that I have focussed overly on knowledge production, leaving the question of knowledge consumption unat-

tended. That is deliberate, as I would like all editors present to help CODESRIA address the question. To what extent are we, as editors, aware of and sensitive to how the journals and debates in them are consumed, or not consumed? Are the journals getting into African universities and courses? Are they shaping the curriculum and thus the thinking? How does the scholarship get cited, used, and appropriated? Perhaps here, editors would like CODESRIA to chip in, given the volume of applications and research output it regularly receives from scholars funded and supported within its networks? Is it important for those responsible for journals to take consumption issues into account? As journal editors, what examples do we have to share of how articles in "your" journal have helped scholars and others refute fallacies and point the way to alternative paths? Like Mahmood Mamdani, Ayesha Imam, Amina Mama and Fatou Sow did? Such examples, I am sure, would inspire others. You might, at the end of all what I have been saying, challenge me to say why, in an ever changing world, CODESRIA should continue exactly with the same prescriptions with which it started when its publications programme was first launched. Is CODESRIA just supposed to do more of the same, in promoting space for critical, deconstructive, reconstructive and alternative work, or do changing contexts necessitate evolving strategies? Finally, given its vision, mission and pan-African approach, what is CODESRIA doing to offer training and promote similar dialogue with editors and granting councils across the continent in these critical approaches?

Success for CODESRIA resides in the ability and commitment of its network and programme coordinators and journal editors to institutionalise a culture and practice of scholarship that systematically, consistently and dynamically enacts its mission beyond merely stating or reproducing it. CODESRIA must be a catalyst for ongoing deconstruction of existing theories and rigorous and creative methodological and theoretical reconstruction that helps the continent understand and project itself into the 21st century.

Gender, Sport and Development in Africa

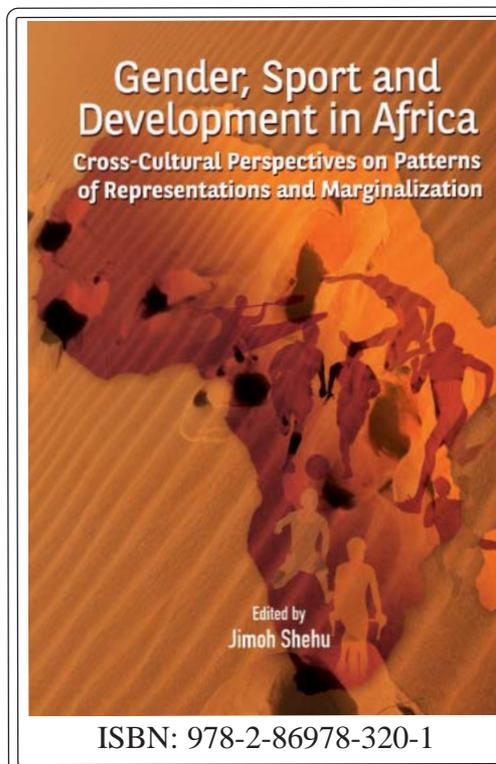
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Edited by Jimoh Shehu

CODESRIA, Dakar, 2010, 168 pp

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In this volume, eleven African scholars offer insightful analyses of the complex ideological and structural dimensions of modern sport as a cultural institution. Drawing on various theories and cross-cultural data, the contributors to this volume highlight the various ways in which sport norms, policies, practices and representations pervasively interface with gender and other socially constructed categories of difference. *Gender, Sport and Development in Africa* is an immensely important contribution to current debates on the broader impacts of sport on society. It is an essential reading for students, policy-makers and others interested in perspectives that interrogate the grand narratives of sport as a neutral instrument of development in African countries.

